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ISSUE 101
MARCH 2002

HYPER»

THE GAMES OF 2002

The **GameCube**
and **Xbox** line-up:
Every upcoming
game compared!



METAL GEAR SOLID 2

GAME
OF THE
MONTH
96%

Kojima speaks "Those who played the
previous game will be shocked"

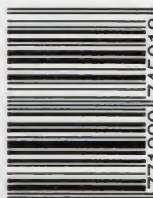
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THE GAME**

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Parappa 2
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The Devil doesn't know it yet,
but there's a bullet
with his name on it.



FONS AGO, IN THE DARKEST REACHES OF HELL, A DEMON
SWORDSMAN NAMED SPARDA WAGED A ONE-MAN WAR TO SAVE
THE HUMAN WORLD FROM DAMNATION. 2000 YEARS LATER, A
SHADOWY FIGURE NAMED DANTE FINDS CLUES THAT THE DEVIL
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PlayStation 2



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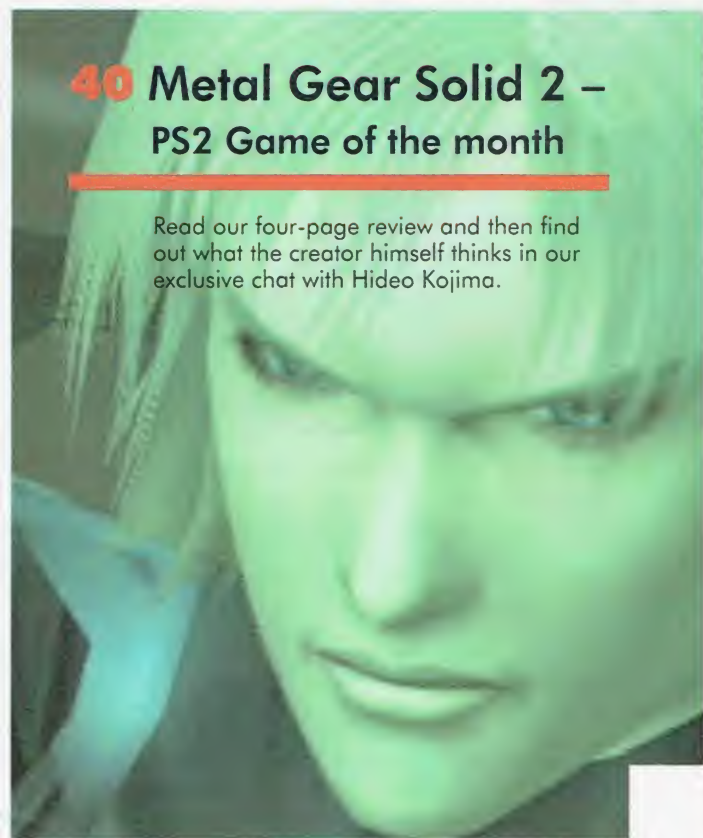
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We chat to the creators of the latest Final Fantasy instalment to find out how they feel about their latest epic



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ISSUE 101 MARCH 2002

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EDITORIAL

»» Welcome to Hyper 101. No, I'm not about to instruct you in the ways of games journalism, this really is issue number 101! This month has seen the arrival of some stupendously big games – Metal Gear Solid 2 has graced our PS2 and you can finally see how it ranks amongst the PS2's increasingly impressive library. Medal of Honor has made it to the PC, and it's a barrel-load (gun barrel that is) of fun. We also take a final look at Final Fantasy X before it arrives for review, and see what the guys at Square think of the game now that it's in the bag.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the great email we received last month for our 100th issue. It's been a joy bringing you Australia's best games coverage for the past eight years, and we will continue to do so well into the next 100 issues! Here's the very first one...

Eliot Fish »» Editor

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NEWS



IN THE NEWS: GameCube release info ■ Sonic GBA/GCN connectivity ■ Lord of the Rings on Xbox ■ Hot new PS2 screenshots



Nintendo want to make PALs

Local GameCube launch plans revealed. Maybe.

The day this issue of Hyper goes on sale, the MILIA tradeshow is taking place over in Cannes, France. MILIA is the premier event for interactive entertainment in Europe and is a key event for game developers, taking place between February 4-8th. Nintendo have revealed that it will be at this tradeshow that they will announce their PAL GameCube plans. The PAL units which will ship to Europe, will also affect Nintendo Australia's launch here in Oz, so finally we'll know when the long awaited GCN is going to arrive on our shores. Could it really be launching on top of the Xbox in March? Nintendo have been ridiculously secretive about the PAL release date, but an announcement at MILIA could mean a mid-March or April release.

Nintendo's approach to marketing their console is very different to Microsoft's gung-ho "here's all the information and more" tactics. In some ways it's kept

❖❖ regardless of when the Gamecube releases, it will be cheaper than either the Xbox or the PS2.

gamers in the dark as to when to expect the new Nintendo console, let alone educate the Australian mainstream that a new Nintendo console actually exists. Following months of hardcore Xbox advertising on buses, at high profile sporting events and in magazines, Nintendo's decision to make an "11th hour" launch date announcement may hurt their chances in making an impression on the local market. What Nintendo do have going for them, is that regardless of when GameCube releases, it will be cheaper than either the Xbox or the PS2. That's always a good thing!

Pokémon For President

❖❖ The president of Nintendo America, Minoru Arakawa, has decided to call it a day after 22 years in the big chair. Now that he has done his duty with the GCN launch in the USA, he has stepped down to make way for Tatsumi Himishima, who was previously CFO of the Pokémon Company and president of Pokémon USA. It sounds like Mr. Himishima's first job will be to convince everyone that the sudden slippage of Eternal Darkness and Star Fox Adventures into late 2002 is a good thing considering there will now be no Nintendo first party GCN releases in the first quarter of this year, with GCN gamers having to survive on third party titles alone with their



brand new console. But chin up, as Miyamoto has let on that both Mario Sunshine and Zelda GCN will be fully playable at this year's E3 - so they can't be far off being completed!

There's plenty to look forward to. In fact, Nintendo stated that there should be 70 GCN titles available (that number includes bucketloads of third party titles, naturally) by the end of 2002 (in America at least).





SONIC HOOK UPS

❖ Sonic for Game Boy Advance and Sonic Adventure 2: Battle for GameCube have more than just a blue spikey mascot in common. Hooking the GBA up to your GameCube will allow you to download "Chao" into your GBA. The Chao are the artificial life forms that we first saw in Sonic Adventure on the Dreamcast — similar to tamagotchi, you could evolve your Chao and enjoy a bit of mini-game action on your Dreamcast memory unit. Now you can play with your Chao in the Chao garden on your GBA

thanks to a built-in feature included in Sonic Advance. You can then upload your Chao back into Sonic Adventure 2: Battle on the GCN and unlock more coolness. Yay for Sonic!

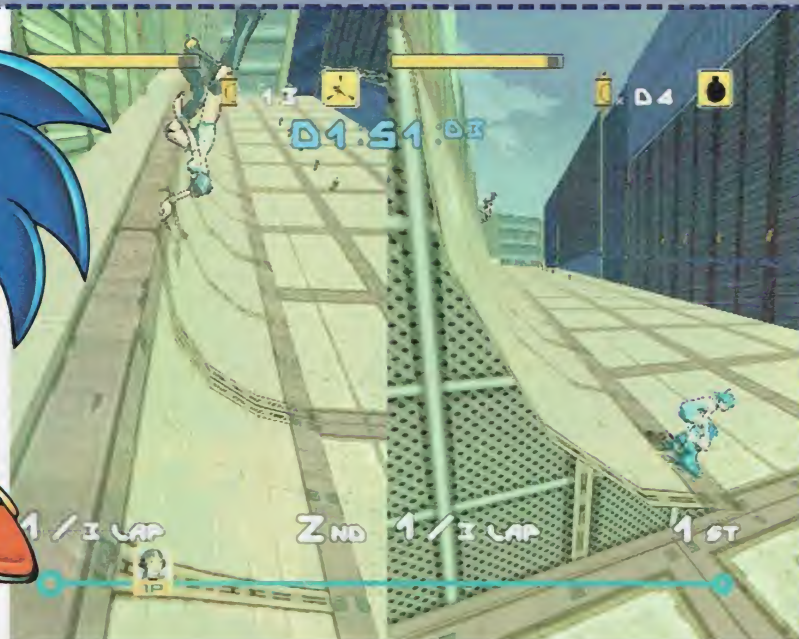


It's absolute Chao around here.

BE A MAC DADDY

❖ Apple have unveiled their brand new iMac — and it's yet another complete knock-out in funky design. What you're looking at is a complete iMac contained within what looks like just the monitor stand and base. That small white dome contains a PowerPC G4 chip at 700MHz or 800MHz, an nVIDIA

GeForce MX video card, 128MB or 256MB of RAM. USB and Firewire ports as standard, and your choice of a 40GB or 60GB hard disk. Not only that, but the 15" LCD flat screen monitor can swivel, tilt and angle in any direction. There is no doubt that Apple make the sexiest computers on the market. We'll bring you a full technical run-down on the new iMac soon.



JET SET RADIO FUTURE GOES MULTIPLAYER!

❖ New info from Smilebit indicates that Jet Set Radio Future for Xbox will introduce multiplayer modes — five, in fact! Up to four players can join in the fun in a variety of games — Capture the Flag (yep, CTF), Race (a test of speed through the city),

Tagger's Tag (where you must spray your opponent with your tag), Graffiti Wars (where you must tag more than your opponent within a time limit) and Death Ball (which plays much like soccer, with two teams trying to score in the opponents' goal).

GRAN TURISMO 4 AND GT PRO

❖ Sony have revealed that the next sequel to Gran Turismo will definitely have online play modes (woo-hoo!), variable weather during the races, and new courses — Hong Kong and China. The online play is a seriously revolutionary enhancement for the series, and it's interesting to note that Polyphony Digital are also

rumoured to be working on Gran Turismo for the PC. If they are including online play in GT4 for PS2, then there's every chance in the world that they are using the same technology for online play in the rumoured PC version, possibly called Gran Turismo Pro. Gran Turismo 4 for PS2 should be due in mid-2003.



CAPTION THIS!

Hey there faithful readers — think you have the wit to make the Hyper team chuckle? Then think of your best caption for this screenshot and email it to Captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 28 in the Subject line.



(This is too easy! - Ed.)



This game could be hobbit forming.



I've come to see your ring!



LORD OF THE RINGS: THE GAMES!

As 2002 draws to a close and we move within distance of the next *Lord of the Rings* movie, *The Two Towers*, Universal Interactive will be releasing an Xbox game based on Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*! As you may or may not know, Electronic Arts have the rights to games based on the Peter Jackson movies, whilst this game from Universal is based on Tolkien's written word alone. This means that the Universal games cannot use the likenesses of the actors in the Jackson films. It's all much of a muchness really, it's all *Lord of the Rings* no matter which way you look at it. One of the bonuses of the Universal games, is that they don't have to ignore parts of the books that have been cut from the films; like the character Tom Bombadil from *Fellowship of the Ring*, for

instance. He'll be in the Xbox game! You'll get to explore the Barrow Downs and encounter the deadly Wights.

The Xbox game in question will be a fully 3D recreation of Middle Earth, with the player taking control of Frodo Baggins, Aragorn or Gandalf the Grey in their quest to destroy the One Ring. You'll encounter Orcs, the Black Riders, and even the Balrog and get your hands dirty in weapons-based combat as well as exploring, questing and puzzle solving.

Universal will also be releasing *The Lord of the Rings: Part One* for the Nintendo Game Boy Advance. This game is based on the first two books, with the player controlling Frodo. The GBA title looks set to be more of a role-playing game. Mount Doom here we come!



The Hyper greenhouse is doing well.



Cam never looks good with a hangover.

WINNERS HYPER» 99

BURNOUT

A.M. Wilson, NZ
Ryan Goostrey, WA
Steele Shepherd, QLD
Ian Hawkins, QLD
Adam Brown, NSW



CIV III

Steve John, SA
Paul Harris, WA
Ben Moloney, QLD
Nick Woo, QLD
Jamie McGraw, QLD



OVERFLOW

Rumour has it that Sega are hard at work on Sega Rally 3... gee, who would have thought? We don't know if any console versions have yet been planned, but you can definitely expect this in arcades sometime within the next year or so.

Nintendo's E-Card reader (which has primarily been designed for use with the new Pokémon cards) will soon support a new feature that makes playable all the old classic Nintendo Game & Watch games. All you need do is swipe the card in the E-Card reader (which slots into your Game Boy Advance), and you'll be playing Oil Panic, Fire and Parachute with the best of 'em.

Interplay have decided that *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* will be going multi-platform, so you can expect to see this cool hack 'n slash coming to your favourite console (hopefully) sometime later in the year. Snowblind studios, the original developer, are doing the port(s).

Shigeru Miyamoto is working on a secret GameCube game that Nintendo should hopefully reveal to the world at E3. His last game for GCN, *Pikmin*, is a cracker and we'll soon be bringing you this and more GameCube reviews in Hyper...

Digital Extremes are working on *Unreal Tournament 2* for the PC. Using the same engine as *Unreal Championship* for the Xbox, it's looking tasty as hell. More info as it comes to hand.

Sony has partnered with IBM and Toshiba to begin a five-year project to create a "supercomputer on a chip", codenamed Cell, and a new operating system designed for the broadband Internet - both of which may form core components of a future Sony entertainment product. Hmm... PlayStation 3?

THQ plan on bringing their WWF license to mobile phones in the form of *WWF Mobile Madness*. Yes, we're not kidding. Any Java-capable phone will be able to run the game which will feature some of the WWF's biggest stars. Go get the baby oil!

G-con2
COMPATIBLE

TAKE SOMEONE SPECIAL OUT



NO.1

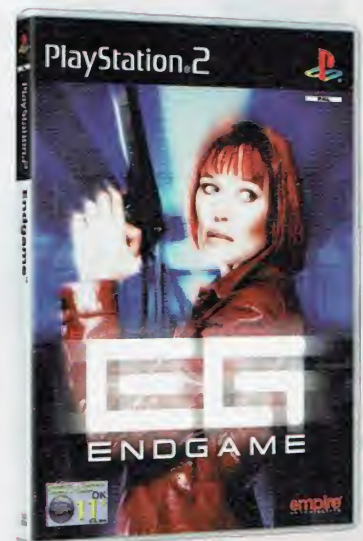
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THE SIMS GO ON HOLIDAY

❖❖ If you thought EA had exhausted all their ideas for the Sims with Hot Date, think again. Now the Sims are off on holiday in The Sims: Vacation. In Vacation, you can take your entire Sims family to a tropical island, the snowy alps, a forest campground or a Riveria style beach. Your Sims can then play volleyball, go fishing, explore the forest, or even go snowboarding. The expansion will feature 120 new objects (phew!), and all-new social interactions. There will also be a "comical" new cast of characters. To cap it all off, your Sims can buy souvenirs to take back home at the end of it all.

PS2 THE POWERHOUSE

❖❖ Over the holiday season in the USA, the PlayStation 2 outsold both the Xbox and the GameCube. Whilst it has had a head start of over one year (the PS2 launched in the USA in October 2000) the PS2 now has a total of over six million units sold throughout the USA. The GameCube and Xbox are almost matching each other unit for unit with just over one million units sold each since November. Between the last week of November and the first week of January, 1.1 million PS2 consoles were sold in Japan, 2.6 times more than in the same period a year earlier. It seems the quality of the PS2 games this Christmas finally convinced many PSone faithfuls to finally do the "upgrade".

It'll be interesting to see if the GCN and Xbox can catch the PS2 in total sales, considering that the PS2 is still selling faster than either of the two new consoles. Sony have now shipped 23 million PS2s worldwide. Crikey!



HOT!

**AUTO MODELLISTA ON PS2!
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**HOT! RESIDENT EVIL SURVIVOR 2 ON PS2!
FIRST SCREENS!**



THE GAME



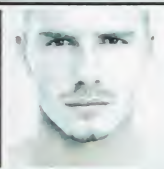
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COLOR



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V-RALLY 3

>> **PS2** INFOGRAMES

Many of you will remember the last V-Rally game on PSone. It was a very close second to Colin McRae rally — a damn fine rally sim packed to the brim with options. Well, now we can look forward to a beefy PS2 update. Just take a look at these powerslidingly nice screens!



SOUL CALIBUR 2

» GCN/XBOX/PS2

NAMCO

If there's one fighting game we just don't have the patience to wait for, it would be Soul Calibur 2. We need and want it NOW. Just take a look at this page of Eye Candy. This game will give Dead or Alive 3 a run for its money in the visuals department, plus be a far superior fighting game. Thank you, Namco!



EYE CANDY

» HYPER 15

NAMCO

fantasy wo



The Final Fantasy film might have been a disaster for Square, but Final Fantasy X sees the Japanese giant doing what they do best – making epic and dazzling role playing games. **JASON HILL** got an extremely rare chance to see where the magic is made.

Square isn't in great shape. The company has lost a fortune on their Hollywood venture, Sony has propped them up with a major share purchase and their President has been forced to step down. But when you enter Square's Tokyo headquarters, you can't help but proceed with reverence. This is the place where the most popular role-playing videogame series of all time was created. For many gamers around the world, it is Mecca.

The chance to speak to the digital demi-Gods that have created some of the best-selling games of all time is a rare opportunity. These men command enormous respect, and

normally outspoken and articulate journalists can find themselves gushing embarrassingly or clamming up in fear of their badly translated questions accidentally insulting their target.

Playing Final Fantasy X just increases your respect for the team. It is one of the most beautiful videogames ever made, and the battle system is better than ever. Square had over 150 people working on the game for three years. Hyper got the chance to talk to the most important members of the team during a day-long visit to the Square offices. Most team members have worked on many previous Final Fantasy instalments.



Yusuke Naora



Tetsuya Nomura



Nobuo Uematsu



Is that a dolphin or are you just pleased to see me?



Kazushige Nojima

SCENARIO DESIGNER

■ Mr. Nojima has previously worked on Final Fantasy VII and VIII. He was responsible for Final Fantasy X's storyline and characters.

HYPER: Does the artistic style and the character designs come first or is the story written first?

KN: Usually we have a rough setting of the story first and then we go along as we exchange information and art comes in the middle. However this time we had to tape the voices first, so we had to decide on the story at an early stage.

HYPER: What concepts does Final Fantasy X express to players this time?

KN: What I wanted to convey was that the characters go to the unknown world and get in touch with people that have different ways of thinking and different world views and gradually get accustomed to it.

HYPER: Did you have any influences when you were writing the story?

KN: I was very much interested in the (Japanese) books that were written during World War II and I was surprised that the mindset or the way

of thinking was very different even though we're both Japanese. So that really influenced me a great deal. Another example is when I travelled to South East Asia I found out that the people there look like us but we cannot communicate, there's a language barrier and different customs.

HYPER: Why did you decide to add voices to the characters?

KN: With PlayStation 2 we have no hardware limitation, so this (voices) became possible. Our ultimate goal is to realise the same level as TV drama in a game, so that is why we put the voices in. It's just the natural course of things. Ever since we completed Final Fantasy VIII this was the big underlying premise that we all agreed on.

HYPER: What is your favourite moment in FFX?

KN: Yuna and Tidus' last scene. It made me cry when I first watched it.

HYPER: How do you explain the success of the Final Fantasy series?

KN: We do not continue the same elements just because it was popular in the previous game. We always try new things, I think that is the key to success.

Toshiro Tsuchida

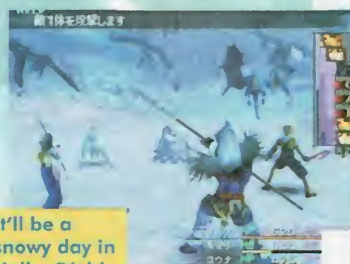
BATTLE DIRECTOR

■ Mr. Tsuchida was working on his first Final Fantasy. He previously worked on the critically acclaimed Front Mission strategy games for Square, and his influence is immediately apparent when you play with the new battle system.

HYPER: The Final Fantasy series has a legion of fans. How did you decide what to change and what to keep?

TT: This was my first chance to work on Final Fantasy so I did not really think about how it was in the past. However, I was a user in the previous Final Fantasy series so I tried to express what I thought was interesting. In the beginning of the planning stage we actually played and experienced (all the previous games) for ourselves.

HYPER: What new features did you bring to the Final Fantasy battle system?



It'll be a snowy day in Hell... D'oh!

TT: The general direction is that we shifted from the Active Time Battle system to the different battle system, where the monster cannot move until the data is input. So we have a different system and this allows the players to think and adopt strategies as they play. However the scenario is important too so we did not want this to have a negative impact on the game. So there are various elements that come into this picture, but we think that not only the battles but the whole game is very consistent.

HYPER: Did your experience on the Front Mission games change the way you approached Final Fantasy X?

TT: Like I said earlier, (the system) allows the players to think and make strategy and that's the joy or pleasure they can experience. So in short, when playing games, the player first understands the rules and then utilises that rule to beat



FFX

»HYPER 17



Shivering Shivas she must be cold.



We've come for yer booty, arrr.



Nice day for a... white wedding.

the monster and that's when they feel joy. So they understand the rule and then they apply. They think and then they achieve their goal. I think this mechanism is the same as the simulation game to which I was previously involved.

HYPEN: Was there a fear of slowing down the speed of the battles?

TT: Yes, that was what we were most concerned about — what we were most careful about. Because as opposed to ATB where time goes by automatically which gives the players a sense of urgency, this new one does not. The monsters do not attack until we are ready, until we take the next step. So we devised a method so that the tempo will not be slower. For example shortening the time from the input to the input for the next character. So we think we were able to enhance the speed of the battle. As long as the player understands the rule, the strategy,

then they can beat the monsters right away. I think we were successful in making the battles end quicker by having the players think a little bit or use strategy.

HYPEN: Do you have any regrets now that you have finished the game?

TT: We used this new hardware (PlayStation 2) this time, so in order to drive more power we had some big battles to surprise the users. So I think the users will be surprised, taken aback by the size of the battles which take place in strange places. This was more tilted towards the design, how we played this up and I think that led to somewhat of a decline in the strategy aspect. The users will be satisfied, they will be surprised and they will have fun I'm sure, but as far as I am concerned, I think I want to dig this deeper.



Bondi Beach sewerage gets worse...

Motomu Toriyama

EVENT DIRECTOR

■ Mr. Toriyama was responsible for the overall planning and directing of the dramatic sequences in Final Fantasy X. He also worked on Final Fantasy VII.

HYPEN: How do you come up with your ideas?

MT: I sometimes come up with an idea while I'm drinking. And then the next day I think about it again when I'm sober and I think 'Well, that really works!'

HYPEN: How do you respond to criticism that the game is too linear this time?

MT: Because we wanted to set out the story in a strong way so that players can put their feelings into it we do induce them to take certain actions. However, what players do, for example, in Town A is up to the player, so we do give players freedom. That's how we the creators try to work this out so they will not get bored, so we have the RPG freedom.

HYPEN: How long does the game take to finish?

MT: It takes 40 to 60 hours, and if

you get really involved in it maybe 100 hours. So it is pretty much the same as previous games.

HYPEN: How much did DVD and the power of the PS2 help in bringing more emotion to the game?

MT: The emotions only used to be expressed in the (dialogue) lines or the message and so players had to use their imagination to guess what the protagonists were feeling. Also in the previous games they only had four kind of facial expression — joy, sorrow, anger and normal. But this time around we can express more minute feelings. There are several types of anger that we can express. We are now able to express more through detailed expressions through voice and realistic facial expressions.

HYPEN: What was the hardest part of development?

MT: How to match the characters acting to the voice actors' enthusiastic performances. It was really difficult to create the realistic characters to match the real actors' performances. At the end of the day, those CG characters are just made of polygons, which are worse than poor actors.



This game will self-destruct in...



KFC poach more poor Chocobos.



Look at me when I'm talking to ya!

Yusuke Naora

ART DIRECTOR

■ Mr. Naora has worked on the Final Fantasy series since VI except IX. Other credits include Chrono Trigger, Front Mission and The Bouncer.

HYPEN: What was your aim for FFX?

YN: By using the new type of console we wanted to create a world that hadn't been seen before.

HYPEN: Did you enjoy working on FFX more than other titles, given that the PS2 allows you to more fully realise your creations?

YN: The work only increases! But I think you can say it was enjoyable for us because the more we worked the more rewarding it was.

HYPEN: Do you consider videogames as art?

YN: I feel that videogames aren't

necessarily art. But I am very happy that people consider that games could be positioned as a type of art. If I had to say, it would be an early stage of art.

HYPEN: Was there any particular inspiration you drew upon when designing the game?

YN: That's a difficult question to answer. The previous Final Fantasy, Final Fantasy IX, was based on a fantasy in the medieval European times and the version before that was a futuristic type of environment so we were wondering what we could do in the next version. We had more or less used up all our ideas. And then one day I happened to wander into a travel agent and I flicked through various pamphlets and I thought maybe this is the image that can be for the next version.

HYPEN: Was it a conscious decision at Square to make the series more Western when it arrived on PlayStation?

YN: We weren't very conscious of creating an impression that was

purely Japanese or adapting it more to Western taste. I consider that Final Fantasy VII was a very special version as compared to the previous versions because many, many staff changed after version VI. For version VII on, the new generation of staff came on and seemed to take leadership which meant they brought many original ideas. That kind of growth continued on from VIII through to X.

Tetsuya Nomura

CHARACTER DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

■ Mr. Nomura is arguably Square's most important asset, and his character designs are loved by gamers all around the world. He has worked on all Final Fantasy games since FFX except IX. Other games include The Bouncer, Kingdom Hearts, Ergheiz, Front Mission, Chrono Trigger and Parasite Eve.

HYPEN: Seeing that the storyline had to come first in FFX, was this more of a restriction for you compared to previous games?

TN: Usually there is a delay in the



Hey bro can you spare a dollar?





Come on Tidus, we'll have a ball!



Death by freak giant raindrop.



scenario creation but this time with the scenario already made it was difficult to go in and design characters. But there were many, many changes that were made. The concept was that we should prioritise the story but it wasn't really solidified. For example when I designed the main character, Tidus, I just had the direction that this person was a very bright person and has a relationship with the water. I don't think there was a great limitation.

HYPER: What is your favourite feature of the game?

TN: The voice-overs. I would like everyone to see what the use of voices does to the characters.

HYPER: How did they affect the game's development?

TN: It made the characters really lively. Before I was a bit worried. But when I saw the actual product, I was convinced that this makes a huge difference. The characters suddenly became lively and you can see the feelings in them.

HYPER: With Final Fantasy characters speaking for the first time, how did this impact your designs?

TN: As a matter of fact I wasn't very much conscious of voices when I originally designed the characters and I think that the decision to have voice-overs was made very much later on in the process. Therefore when it was decided the main characters would speak there was an audition for actors and I was present. I more or less listened to their voices while looking at the characters I had designed.

HYPER: Which character is your favourite apart from Tidus and Yuna?

TN: Jecht. When I sketched his image as a rough drawing, I just fell in love with the sketch. Usually when I sketch, I make them quite neatly, but with Jecht I just did it really roughly and it still looked great!

HYPER: Is there still a place for super-deformed characters in future?

TN: I think that kind of direction is dependent on the director. It really depends on how the director considers the game and I am able to adjust.

Hiroshi Kuwabara

MOVIE DIRECTOR

■ Mr. Kuwabara's task is to direct the full motion video sequences in the game. He had previously worked on Final Fantasy VIII and IX.

HYPER: What did Square's experience of making the Hollywood film bring to Final Fantasy X?

HK: There were a lot of improvements seen in technology and this was very much experienced by the team. We sent some of the main members of our team over (to Hawaii) in order to study the technologies that they were using. The various methods couldn't be brought back and used as is so they had to be customised because of the difference in scale of the task. The experiences on that project were very much crucial.

HYPER: Will in-game graphics ever catch up to computer-generated visuals?

HK: In the end ultimately there will be no gap.

HYPER: What do you think of the PS2 hardware?

HK: When I look at it from the

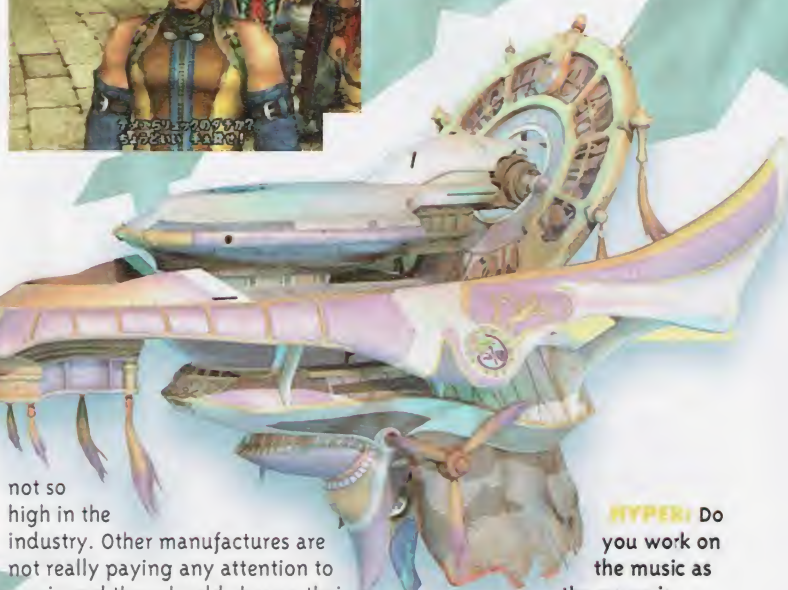




Wanna come upstairs for a nightcap?



Capt. Picard reporting for duty, sir.



viewpoint of the movie I am very thankful that there has been such an improvement and progression of the console. We have been able to increase the images per second and the resolution has been very much more enhanced, as has the compression and capability. In the end we have been able to achieve very beautiful images. I think when we switch over the realtime events and the CG movies it is much more smooth, which adds to the drama.

Nobuo Uematsu

SOUND/MUSIC COMPOSER

■ Mr. Uematsu is regarded as one of the best game music composers in the industry. He has worked on all the Final Fantasy games, along with many others including Chrono Trigger and Mario RPG.

HYPER: Do you think Square pays more attention to sound and music than other developers?

NU: Other manufacturers do not pay much attention to music. That's why the position of game music is

not so high in the industry. Other manufacturers are not really paying any attention to music and they should change their attitude towards music. If other manufacturers continue to neglect game music, awareness of game music will not grow. There will be no growth or development or evolution. If I had more time I would like to ask other game music composers to get together to do some events so that there's better awareness of game music, not only among game players but other people.

HYPER: How many tracks did you create for FFX?

NU: 80-90.

HYPER: In what kind of environment do you create your music?

NU: I can be forced to do it anywhere, but basically I sit in front of a keyboard piano everyday from morning til' night.

HYPER: Do you work on the music as the game is created, or do you come along at the end of development?

NU: I start composing after I see the scenario and character designs.

HYPER: Thanks for your time. <<

Hope he wore the brown undies!





\$44⁹⁵

The Sims Hot Date PC. (M15+)



\$89⁹⁵

Rally Trophy PC. (G)



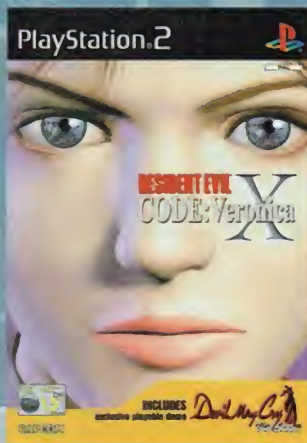
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Just Bring It PS2. (M15+)



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X PS2. (M15+)



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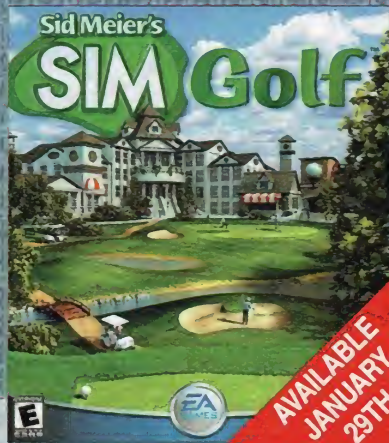
Twisted Metal Black PS2.
(MA15+)

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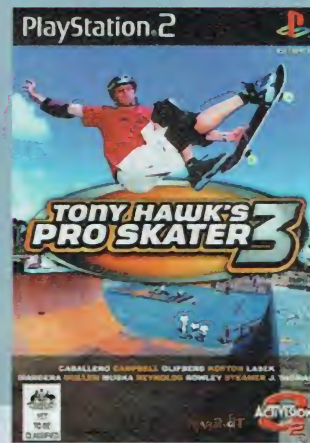
\$99⁹⁵

Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex PS2. (G)



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007: Agent Under Fire PS2. (M15+)



\$99⁹⁵

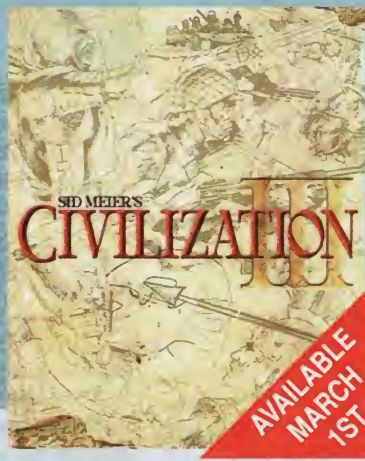
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 PS2. (M15+)

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TAMAGOTCHI



WWW.THESIMSONLINE.COM

So far, The Sims is the world's most advanced game of tamagotchi. Although sophisticated on some levels, the reason that the game is so popular is because we anthropomorphize the characters in the game to become REAL little people. REAL little versions of ourselves. So imagine what's going to happen when the other sims start talking back. When every sim you see has a real person behind their words and actions. Finally, your sim will be your avatar in a brave new world.

AN ECHO FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Indeed, what could be scarier than "The Sims" as a virtual world? It's so clean. So sanitized. So... un-cyberpunk! While many of us are waiting for our gritty, future-funk mental image of virtual reality to come true, the actual reality of it is going to be commercial. When The Sims goes online, it will in many respects, be leading the way. It's

one of gaming's most popular franchises after all, and The Sims Online could be the mainstream's ticket to life in a virtual world. William Gibson is probably rolling around in his grave. Oh wait, he's not dead yet.

Interaction will be, of course, the key to The Sims Online's gameplay. Players will be encouraged to interact in a multitude of ways. At a basic level, you'll have mini-games built in so players can challenge one another in chess, blackjack or checkers. At a more involved level, players will need to co-operate with each other, and respect the structure and rules of the society just like in real life. Some players will choose to run businesses and enterprises, while others will choose to work in them, and get paid. Cooperation will be key.

Simoleans are going to play an important role in the game, and should complement the social aspect well. As societal structures and financial structures start to form, more complex hierarchies will



emerge, such as companies, when players discover the buying power of pooling their resources. Players will even be able to combine real estate to create massive areas, just perfect for setting up a gym or a burlesque house. Then other players will have to pay simoleans to come in and use the equipment/services provided. As the communities grow, users will probably even start to band together by interest and create niche neighbourhoods — like a sci-fi themed area, or perhaps even a red light district.

A large part of the Sims Online experience will be purely social. Will Wright is hoping to take the intensely social aspects of the internet — chat rooms, instant messaging and



bulletin boards, and place them within a fun world that users will have a large degree of control over. The game will operate on a monthly subscription fee, which will give you three sims. You'll only be able to have one "online" at a time, and if you're not connected, then nor are your sims. The caveat to that, however, is that players will be able to band together to form clubs and associations. These clubs will then be able to elect a leader. Leaders will have special abilities, like being able to keep their house (or club headquarters) online 24 hours a day — even when they're not online. As you can imagine, interests will play a large role in the game. You'll be able to set your sim's interests and



»»Everyday I get to work, log into my workstation, and start the daily ritual. First, to PvP Online, then on to Little Gamers. After this I check if Penny Arcade and Megatokyo has been updated. Once this is done, it's time to log into Neopets to beef up my Aisha for her next encounter at the Battledome.

Why do I do this?

Because there isn't much else to do on the net.

Once upon a time, when I was first introduced to the Internet, I would religiously log in every day to play Legend of the Red Dragon on a local BBS. Maybe spend a few mind numbing hours looking for interesting web pages, or chatting to friends overseas on Mirc.

After 6 years though, I think I've seen everything that I want to see. I've received all the humorous office emails (you know the ones – Darwin Awards, jokes about getting drunk and amusing pictures of funny signs and t-shirts), the links to Incredible Machine based Flash games, looked up pictures of The Goodies, and tried to shop online for anything from DVDs to Athames.

But what's left to do?

Online gaming is still strong, and since Broadband has become more easily attained by the home user a whole lot of warez, mpegs and mp3s are all readily available to take up all your hard drive space. But even this is slowly becoming more and more commercial. Fan sites claim a need to plaster their sites with banner ads and pop up windows for the latest in web cam technology; Napster (the whole reason a lot of people I know went online in the first place) is soon to re-open as a subscriber service; and more and more kids are finding PrOn sites easier than before (all it takes these days is a typo – sometimes not even that).

So what is left to do? For me, I'll stick to online comics and Neopets. If anyone finds anything worth seeing or doing online – send me an email.

Discourse, flames, opinions to budinska@another.com



hobbies, and then search for other like-minded players. Like any good instant messaging program you'll also be able to bookmark your friends so you know when they're online.

AAA PIZ-OPULENT

Status in the game can be achieved in a number of ways. There's the financial aspect – if you can run a

successful business, then you can become an opulent sim. Then there's the popularity angle – you may not provide a service, just a cool place to hang out. Popularity will be measured by stats and votes from other users. You'll be able to check out a "most visited house" list, as well as other stats like "most friends", "most simoleans" and

even "most slaps"!

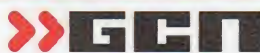
The interface in The Sims, while not perfect, still represented a landmark in terms of ergonomic design. The new interface expands on the old one, with new additions like the ability to set your sim's mood, and express that mood through hand gestures and body language. The interface will be one of the most important aspects in securing mainstream popularity, so let's hope they get it right.

Of course, in any online community there will always be undesirables – those people that set out to ruin other users' experiences. Fortunately, in The Sims Online you'll be able to ban users from entering your house, and set users to ignore status so they can no longer contact/interact with you in any way. And one can imagine exclusive hang-outs developing where only the select elite are allowed in. Just like real life! So when The Sims goes online keep an eye out for the Hyper partyhouse... just don't expect us to let you in without forking over serious Simoleans ;) <<<





SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



CATEGORY: Mascot Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **AVAILABLE:** Launch

WOW-O-METER

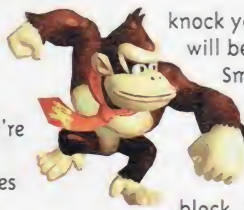


One of the most polished games at E3 was undoubtedly Super Smash Bros Melee (SSBM), and we're pleased to report that the final version very much lives up to expectations. Melee represents much more than a simple remake of the N64 game. If the original was the tasty entrée, then

Melee is the juicy main course that leaves you so stuffed you can barely stand up. HAL Labs have gone to town on this one, packing it with more characters, arenas, options and "unlockables" than just about any other game we've played.

PLAYING WITH YOURSELF...

The basic gameplay hasn't changed — one to four players duke it out in an arena, and the higher your damage meter, the further you're flung when hit, with the goal being to knock your opponents out of the arena more times than they



knock you out. Melee's controls will be instantly familiar to Smash Bros fans, but there are enough tweaks to make this a much more playable game. For instance, you can now block, dash and evade — both on the ground and in the air, and the throw mechanics are more balanced. There are still only two attack buttons, and the moves are easy to pull off, but it's knowing when to use the moves and how to time them that's important. Of course, there are also a seemingly endless pool of items that can appear during each game — from Pokéballs and lightsabers to flamethrowers. Then there's the character line-up — 14 to start with, and another 11 to unlock. With the exception of "companion characters" (such as Mario and Dr Mario), each character has their own attributes, moves and play style, so there's plenty of

depth in mastering the various characters, and a player for everyone. Melee has around 30 stages, all based on Nintendo franchises, and with enough variety to keep you hooked for some time. From small, basic arenas to massive multi-tiered juggernauts, and arenas that change as the battle progresses, it's all good.

The original SSB is renowned for being one of the best four person games on the N64, but it wasn't as strong in the single player department. HAL Labs have rectified this for the sequel. The single player has a whole host of options, but for now we'll just tell you about Event and Adventure. Event is a series of wacky arena battles (51 in all) that are inventive and often very challenging, such as Super Mario 128, where you have to battle a total of 128 mini-Marios! A lot of fun to be had, that's for sure. Then there's the Adventure mode, which combines old school side-



scrolling action with themed arena fights. So the Mario level sees you running along in a SMB1 inspired platform world, jumping on the heads of Goombas until you reach Princess Peach's Castle, where you enter into an arena battle against who else — but Peach and Mario! Each stage in the Adventure mode is themed like this, from Kirby's Dreamland to Zelda's dungeons, and for Nintendo freaks in particular, it's awesome fun. Unfortunately, the





Bowser just found something to clean his teeth with.

Kirby must be on a "seafood" diet...

"I'm gonna kick you in da nuts!"



BEST PAUSE FUNCTION EVER!

Want to see the characters up close? At any moment in battle you can pause the action and zoom right in to examine each player, and the detail is stunning. Mario's overalls look like actual denim. Ganondorf's fingers are all individually modelled and if his mouth is open you can actually see his tongue inside. And of course, the characters have personality in spades too. One look at Kirby after he's taken on the abilities of another character will crack you up - like Bowser-Kirby, complete with horns and thick mane of hair, or the disgustingly cute Metroid Kirby, with his huge eyes peering out from under Samus' visor!

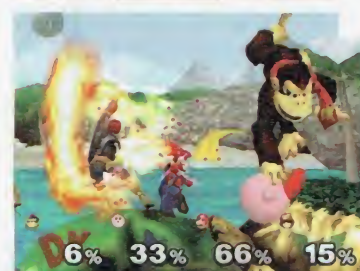
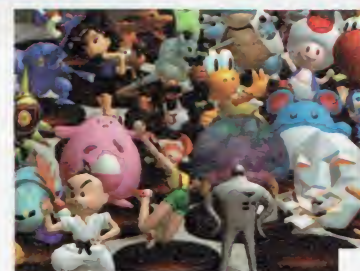
levels are the same no matter which character you're using, but there's still plenty of replay value trying to play through with the different characters. And of course, beating stuff in the various single player modes unlocks all sorts of goodies for multiplayer matches too.

THIS GAME IS CRATE

SSBM is still a multiplayer game at heart, and HAL Labs certainly haven't skimped on the options. If anything, it's overwhelming coming to terms with just how much they've packed in. You can speed up and slow down fights, adjust the items that will appear, change all the rules around, or even fight as giants! Best of all, if every player has their own name entered, the game keeps track of every stat you can possibly think of for that person, resulting in the mother-of-all-play-archives. But disregarding all that, SSBM succeeds on raw gameplay alone - it's every bit as addictive and frenetic as the original. Plus, it moves at a silky 60fps, with excellent particle and lighting

effects and gorgeous character models.

Further proof of the ridiculous amount of effort that HAL Labs have put into this game is the Trophy mode. It's basically just a glorified viewing gallery for collectables, but there are around 300 trophies to collect in the game, and trust us, it will take a lot of playing to collect them all! The trophies can be almost anything, from inanimate objects and items (our personal favourite being "crate" - an unintentional homage to gaming's biggest cliché), to a whole host of Nintendo characters - great or small, and all immaculately rendered. Best of all, every single trophy has a description of what it is, and if it's a character, a biography. You can then zoom right in or out, rotate the model around and cycle through a variety of lighting effects. It's like a Nintendo museum, and the kind of addition that makes SSBM a must-buy for Nintendo fans. The best GameCube game so far? We think it might be.



SSBM has more flaming rings...



...than an Indian Restaurant!

INSIGHT

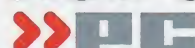
»HYPER 27



"Stonehenge, where the demons dwell...!"



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY



CATEGORY: RTS >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>

PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> AVAILABLE: Sep 2002

The basic philosophy of Age of Mythology is to take you back to the days when the gods played an ever-present role in people's lives - when entire civilisations were subject to the whims of the heavens. As such, you play as one of three civilisations - Greek, Egyptian and Norse. Each has three main gods that they worship, and after selecting your civ you must choose one as a primary deity, which will determine special bonuses and abilities for your civilisation, as well as what kind of hero you can have. The new resource in the game is favour with the gods, which will enable you to summon mythological creatures and the powers of the gods to do your

WOW-O-METER

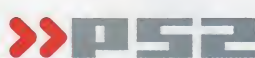


bidding. So get ready for some truly spectacular smiting of thine enemies!

Ensemble Studios are making a concerted effort to make the campaign mode more compelling than in the AOE games too, so Age of Mythology will have only one dedicated campaign. You'll play as a hero and undertake a series of quests that will take you through each of the game's cultures, and on journeys of mythological proportions, like into the Underworld of Hades. Storyline will really drive the campaign mode, and it should complement the multiplayer game perfectly. Going to be hot.



STAR WARS: RACER REVENGE



CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>

PUBLISHER: LucasArts >> AVAILABLE: TBA

WOW-O-METER



Flthough most Star Wars fans would like to forget that Episode 1: The Phantom Menace ever happened, there's no denying that the pod racing showdown was a great action sequence. There's also no denying that, although entertaining, the first game based on it - Star Wars: Racer, could have been a lot better. Enter Rainbow Studios, one of the most consistent development houses in the racing game world, and now in charge of Star Wars: Racer Revenge. Set eight years after the original, the world has changed a little - Anakin is no longer a child, Sebulba is bitter and seeking

revenge, the pods are beefier and the courses are more dangerous. Revenge will have 14 new courses, set on four new planets - Mon Calamari, Ryloth, Sullust and Gamorr, with only the Tatooine setting returning from the original. There'll be 23 selectable characters, so if you don't want to race as Hayden "lover-boy" Christensen, you don't have to. Plus, you'll get bonus credits for ramming other craft out of the race, so we're hoping Jar Jar has his own pod racer. Revenge is looking very promising.



Hopefully not poddu!

AP: 7/10
MP: 6.05/65
LP: 0.01/51



INSIGHT

28 >> HYPER

347

TEMP



I hope this game doesn't "crash", ho ho!

CRASH BANDICOOT



CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >>

PUBLISHER: Vivendi >> AVAILABLE: TBA

It should come as no great surprise to find out that Crash Bandicoot is heading to the GBA. It seems this is one franchise that will never die. Fortunately, however, Vicarious Visions (Tony Hawk 2 GBA) are handling the development duties. While we're hardly expecting a reinvention for the series, this should be quite a playable game. Crash is once again going up against the evil Dr Neo Cortex, who has shrunk the entire Earth down to the size of a football. How to reverse this? Well, Crash's kid sister

Coco is working on a machine, except she needs a bunch of crystals to power it... whatever. This latest pocket-sized iteration of Crash is looking pretty nice, and in keeping with previous games in the series will feature a variety of gameplay styles, from the traditional side-scrolling action and underwater err... side-scrolling action, to 3D chase sequences and even some aerial dogfighting. Definitely one for Crash fans to keep an eye on.

WOW-O-METER



WIN WIN WIN

ENTRIES CLOSE MARCH 1ST

WIN WWF SMACKDOWN: JUST BRING IT!

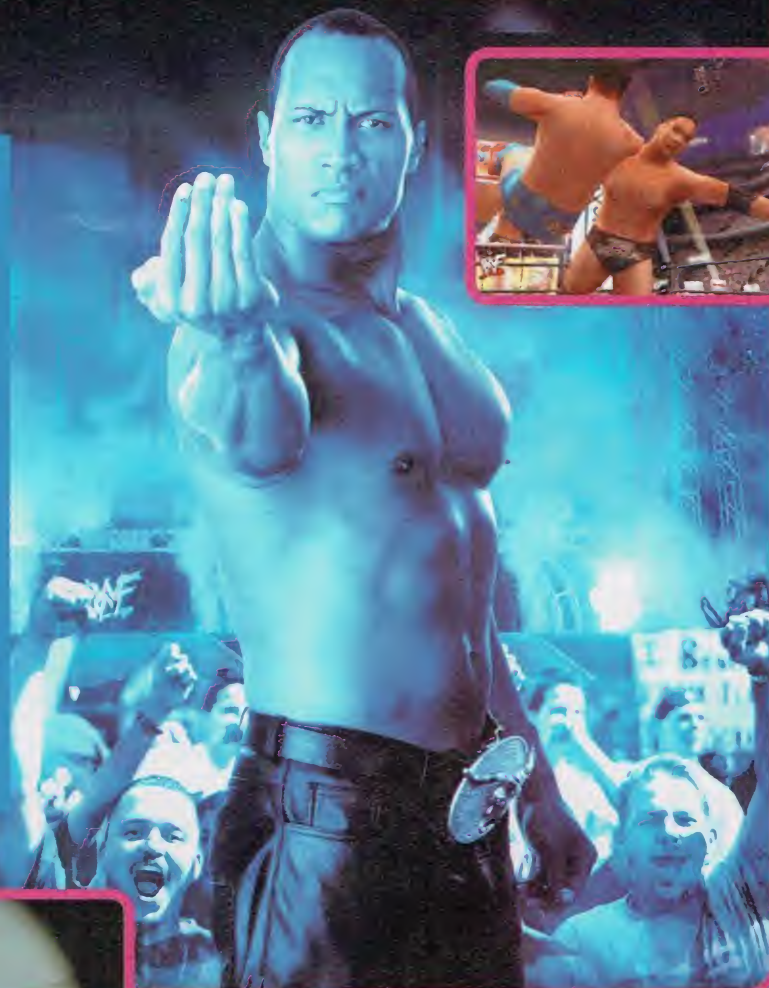
You know that if you paraded around in your underpants, completely covered in baby oil, picking up chairs and throwing them around the room, the only friends you'd make would be with the local police. Thanks to THQ, you can do all this and more in the safety of your own home with WWF Smackdown: Just Bring It! for the PlayStation 2. We're so eager to stop you squeezing people's heads with your thighs in real life, we want you to win one of five packs we are giving away. Each winner will not only win this great wrestling game, but a special Devil May Cry folder containing prints of artwork from the game as a cool bonus.

**FOR
PS2**

To win one of these prizes, answer the following question:

❖❖ Which video game system did the Rock recently endorse?

Put your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Smackdown: Just Win It!**, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.



WIN MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

War! What is it good for? Absolutely nothin'. Huh! Well, actually, even though it really sucked and lots of people died, World War II has fuelled many pieces of art, film, song and now... videogames! So something good came out of it. Kinda. Medal of Honor: Allied Assault is a great break from reality. It's fun, furious and frightening. Thanks to Electronic Arts, we have five copies of the game to giveaway. To win, just answer this question:

**FOR
PC**


❖❖ Did they ever save Private Ryan?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope, along with your name and address, and post it to: **Make Games Not War**, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.

MEDAL OF HONOR FRONTLINE

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as Lt. Jimmy Patterson of the Air Transport Corps in Medal Of Honor:Frontline for the PlayStation®2 Computer Entertainment System. After taking part in the largest aerial troop drop in history, you'll fight the Axis Powers as an agent of the OSS. Battle on the front lines or go it alone behind enemy lines using over 20 authentic WWII weapons to bring down the Third Reich. Survive the first deadly mission and you're only 17 more away from victory.

 PlayStation®2



“you are about upon the great





to embark
crusade."

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, D-Day.

MEDAL OF HONOR

ALLIED ASSAULT™

STEP INTO THE BOOTS of Lt. Mike Powell of the First Ranger Battalion in Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault for your PC. Join the 'special infantry' as an elite soldier trained to execute covert missions in advance of major Allied offensives. Fight with a crack unit or go it alone using over 20 authentic WWII weapons to defeat a vicious, motivated enemy. But remember with six harrowing campaigns, the only reward for victory is another deadly mission.

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GAMECUBE vs XBOX: HOW DO THEY COMPARE?

ALL THE UPCOMING GAMES CATEGORISED!

With the Xbox launch coming up on March 14 and the GameCube launch following shortly thereafter, you may be wondering which console is going to be the one for you. The only true way to decide, naturally, is by evaluating the software line-up. Whilst new games are getting announced almost daily, the following lists are still a very good indication of how the games line-up for both systems is shaping up. Hopefully, this guide will help you decide which console is more suited to your gaming desires.

WHAT ABOUT PS2?

Please note: we have chosen not to include the PS2 in this comparison, as the aim here was to evaluate the two unreleased consoles. Be aware that many titles listed here are also coming to the PS2! More on the future of the PS2 in an upcoming issue.



PLATFORMER

Current leader: Gamecube

The sheer quality and originality of what Nintendo have up their sleeve leaves the Xbox platformers in the dust.

XBOX

- Dragon's Lair 3D (TBA)
- Malice: Kat's Tale (TBA)
- Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee (MICROSOFT)
- Spyro The Dragon (VIVENDI)

GAMECUBE

- Banjo Kazooie 3 (RARE)
- Mario Sunshine (NINTENDO)
- Pac-Man World 2 (NAMCO)
- Sonic Adventure 2 (SEGA)



Sonic Adventure 2



Dragon's Lair 3D



Mario Sunshine



Soccer Slam

SPORT

Current leader: on par

Both GameCube and Xbox have a healthy slew of sports titles coming their way, with most titles appearing on both platforms.

XBOX

- Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding (MICROSOFT)
- Championship Manager 01/02 (EIDOS)
- Dark Summit (THQ)
- Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 (ACCLAIM)
- David Beckham Soccer (RAGE)
- ESPN International Winter Sports (KONAMI)
- ESPN Winter X Games (KONAMI)
- FIFA 2002 (EA SPORTS)
- ISS X (KONAMI)
- MX2002 (THQ)
- NBA2K2 (SEGA)
- NBA Inside Drive 2002 (MICROSOFT)
- NFL2K2 (SEGA)
- NFL Fever 2002 (MICROSOFT)
- NHL Hitz 2003 (MIDWAY)
- Outlaw Golf (SIMON & SCHUSTER)
- Red Card Soccer (MIDWAY)
- SSX Tricky (EA BIG)
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (ACTIVISION)
- Transworld Skateboarding (INFOGRAMES)
- Transworld Snowboarding (INFOGRAMES)
- Transworld Surfing (INFOGRAMES)
- UFC Tapout (CRAVE/UBISOFT)
- WWF Raw is War (THQ)

GAMECUBE

- 1080 Snowboarding 2 (NINTENDO)
- Dark Summit (THQ)
- ESPN International Winter Sports (KONAMI)
- FIFA 2002 (EA SPORTS)
- Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt. (MIDWAY)
- Jeremy McGrath Supercross World (ACCLAIM)
- Knockout Kings 2002 (EA)
- Legends of Wrestling (ACCLAIM)
- NBA2K2 (SEGA)
- NBA Courtside 2002 (NINTENDO)
- NBA Street (EA BIG)
- NHL Hitz 2003 (MIDWAY)
- NFL Blitz 2002 (MIDWAY)
- NFL Quarterback Club (ACCLAIM)
- Red Card Soccer (MIDWAY)
- Soccer Slam (SEGA)
- SSX Tricky (EA BIG)
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (ACTIVISION)
- Virtua Striker 3 (SEGA)
- WWF Wrestlemania (THQ)



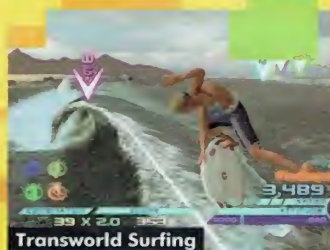
Munch's Oddysee



NHL Hitz 2003



NBA Inside Drive 2002



Transworld Surfing



Dark Summit



NFL2K2

RACING

current leader: XBOX

Xbox simply has more racing games in development, along with key titles such as Colin McRae Rally 3, the incredible-looking Wreckless and Sega GT 2.

XBOX

- 4X4 EVO 2 (TAKE 2)
- Cel Damage (EA)
- Circus Maximus (TBA)
- Colin McRae Rally 3 (CODEMASTERS)
- Crash (RAGE SOFTWARE)
- Crazy Taxi Next (SEGA)
- F1 2002 (EA SPORTS)
- Lotus Challenge (VIRGIN)
- Mad Dash Racing (INFOGRAMES)
- Maximum Chase (MICROSOFT)
- Nascar Heat 2002 (INFOGRAMES)
- Project Gotham Racing (MICROSOFT)
- Rallisport (MICROSOFT)
- Ridge Racer (NAMCO)
- Sega GT 2 (SEGA)
- Smashing Drive (NAMCO)
- TOCA Race Driver (CODEMASTERS)
- Test Drive: Off Road (INFOGRAMES)
- Test Drive: Underground (INFOGRAMES)
- Wreckless (ACTIVISION)

GAMECUBE

- 18-Wheeler American Pro Trucker (SEGA)
- Cel Damage (EA)
- Crazy Taxi (SEGA)
- Donkey Kong Racing (RARE)
- Extreme-G 3 (ACCLAIM)
- Mario Kart GCN (NINTENDO)
- Ridge Racer (NAMCO)
- Smashing Drive (NAMCO)
- Wave Race: Blue Storm (NINTENDO)



Wreckless



Cel Damage



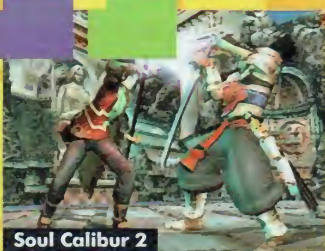
Donkey Kong Racing



Rallisport Challenge



Circus Maximus



Soul Calibur 2



Wrath



Dead or Alive 3

FIGHTING

current leader: XBOX

The Xbox has the lead in this category thanks to Dead or Alive 3 being an Xbox exclusive.

XBOX

- Dead Or Alive 3 (TECMO)
- Kabuki Warriors (CRAVE)
- Mortal Kombat 5 (MIDWAY)
- Ready 2 Rumble Boxing X (MIDWAY)
- Soul Calibur 2 (NAMCO)
- Wrath (MICROSOFT)
- X-Men: Next Dimension (ACTIVISION)

GAMECUBE

- Bloody Roar: Primal Fury (ACTIVISION)
- Mortal Kombat 5 (MIDWAY)
- Soul Calibur 2 (NAMCO)

ACTION

Current leader: **XBOX**

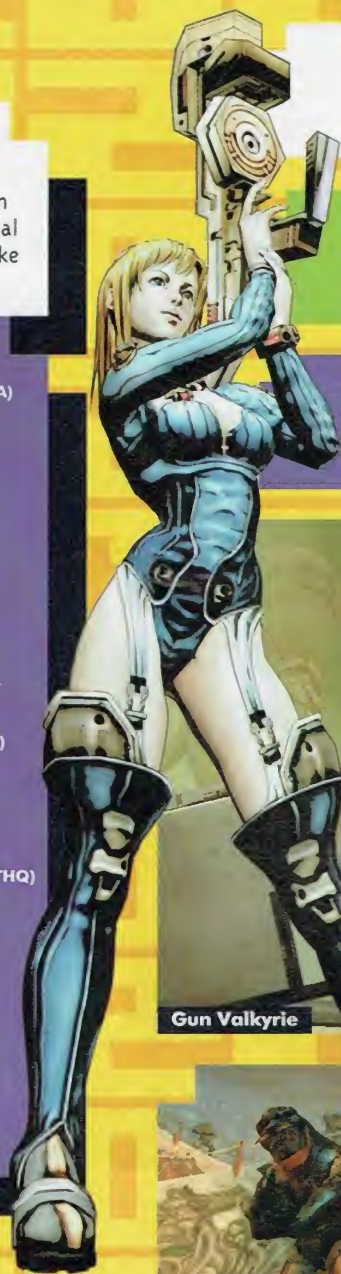
Due to sheer variety, the Xbox has nudged ahead of GameCube in the extremely important Action category. Having games like Metal Gear Solid X, Jet Set Radio Future and Grand Theft Auto 3 will make the Xbox very hard to resist.

XBOX

- 007... Agent Under Fire (EA)
- Airforce Delta Storm (KONAMI)
- Azurik: Rise of Perathia (MICROSOFT)
- B.C. (MICROSOFT)
- Batman Vengeance (UBISOFT)
- BloodRayne (TERMINAL STUDIOS)
- Blood Omen 2 (EIDOS)
- Blood Wake (MICROSOFT)
- Bounty Hunter (EA)
- Brute Force (MICROSOFT)
- Buffy The Vampire Slayer (FOX INTERACTIVE)
- Dead To Rights (NAMCO)
- Defender (MIDWAY)
- Enclave (CONSPIRACY)
- Galleon (INTERPLAY)
- Giants X (INTERPLAY)
- Grand Theft Auto 3 (ROCKSTAR)
- Gun Metal (RAGE SOFTWARE)
- Gun Valkyrie (SEGA/INFOGRAMES)
- Hunter: The Reckoning (INTERPLAY)
- Jet Set Radio Future (SEGA)
- Jonny Drama (SIERRA)
- Metal Gear Solid X (KONAMI)
- New Legends (THQ)
- Nightcaster (MICROSOFT)
- Orchid (ARGONAUT)
- Panzer Dragoon (SEGA)
- Rayman Arena (UBISOFT)
- Shrek (TDK)
- Spiderman: The Movie (ACTIVISION)
- Spy Hunter (ACCLAIM)
- Star Wars: Obi-Wan (LUCASARTS)
- Star Wars: Starfighter Special Edition (LUCASARTS)
- Strident (PHANTAGRAM)
- The Matrix (INTERPLAY)
- The Thing (UNIVERSAL)
- Yager (THQ)

GAMECUBE

- 007... Agent Under Fire (EA)
- Batman: Dark Tomorrow (KEMCO)
- BloodRayne (TERMINAL STUDIOS)
- Dead To Rights (NAMCO)
- Defender (MIDWAY)
- Galleon (INTERPLAY)
- Gauntlet Dark Legacy (MIDWAY)
- Harry Potter (EA)
- Kameo: Elements of Power (RARE)
- Luigi's Mansion (NINTENDO)
- Rayman Arena (UBISOFT)
- Shrek (TDK)
- Spiderman: The Movie (ACTIVISION)
- Spongebob Squarepants (THQ)
- Spy Hunter (ACCLAIM)
- Star Wars: Rogue Leader (LUCASARTS)
- Starfox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet (RARE)
- Tarzan (UBISOFT)
- Too Human (NINTENDO)
- The Matrix (INTERPLAY)
- The Powerpuff Girls (BAM)



Gun Valkyrie



Starfox Adventures



Brute Force



Kameo



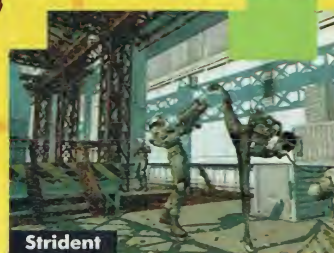
Jet Set Radio Future



Galleon



Yager



Strident



Gun Metal



Unreal Championship



Halo



Max Payne



Perfect Dark 2



Metroid Prime

SHOOTER

Current leader: **XBOX**

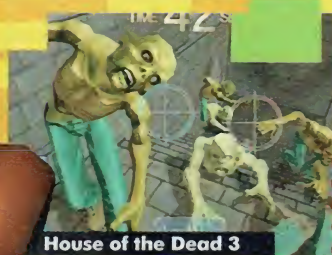
Xbox wins out yet another category thanks to the awesome Halo, Unreal Championship and the plethora of PC shooters that will port over to the Xbox with ease.

XBOX

- Conflict Desert Storm (TBA)
- Duke Nukem Forever (TAKE 2)
- Halo (BUNGIE/MICROSOFT)
- Ghost Recon (UBISOFT)
- Hitman 2 (EIDOS)
- House of the Dead 3 (SEGA)
- Max Payne (ROCKSTAR)
- Medal of Honor: Allied Assault (EA)
- S.W.A.T: Global Strike Team (SIERRA)
- Serious Sam (CROTEAM)
- Shayde (TBA)
- Timesplitters 2 (EIDOS)
- Turok Evolution (ACCLAIM)
- Unreal Championship (INFOGRAMES)

GAMECUBE

- Duke Nukem Forever (TAKE 2)
- Metroid Prime (RETRO STUDIOS)
- Perfect Dark 2 (RARE)
- Rogue Spear (UBISOFT)
- Turok Evolution (ACCLAIM)



House of the Dead 3

PARTY/PUZZLE/STRATEGY/MISC.

Current leader: **GAMECUBE**

Nintendo know how to make great multiplayer and puzzle games, just take a look at Super Smash Bros Melee and Pikmin to see why. With Super Monkey Ball, Pokémon and Worms on the list, the GameCube is streets ahead here.

XBOX

- Commandos 2 (EIDOS)
- Fuzion Frenzy (MICROSOFT)
- Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown (TBA)
- Tetris Worlds (THQ)

GAMECUBE

- 100 Marios (NINTENDO)
- Bomberman Generation (CAPCOM)
- Kirby GCN (NINTENDO)
- Pikmin (NINTENDO)
- Pokémon GCN (NINTENDO)
- Super Monkey Ball (SEGA)
- Super Smash Bros. Melee (HAL/NINTENDO)
- Tetris World (THQ)
- Worms Blast (UBISOFT)



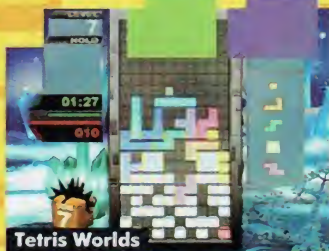
Super Monkey Ball



Robin Hood: DOTC



Super Smash Bros Melee



Tetris Worlds



Pikmin



Zelda



Morrowind

RPG

Current leader: **Gamecube**

GameCube is looking pretty good for RPGs at the moment, with the Xbox needing to do quite a bit of catch up. And how can you resist a new Zelda game?

XBOX

- Elder Scrolls 3: Morrowind (BETHESDA)
- Gaia Blade (FROM SOFTWARE)
- Legend of the Sun (DREAMFORGE)
- PS Online (SEGA)

GAMECUBE

- Evolution Worlds (UBISOFT)
- Gold Star Mountain (FROM SOFTWARE)
- Golden Sun (CAMELOT/NINTENDO)
- PS Online (SEGA)
- Rune (FROM SOFTWARE)
- Skies of Arcadia (SEGA)
- The Legend of Zelda GCN (NINTENDO)



Rune



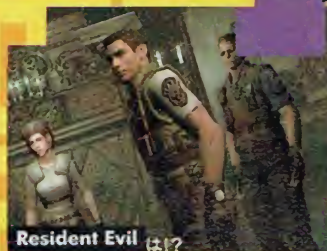
Phantasy Star Online



Eternal Darkness



Sam & Max 2



Resident Evil



ADVENTURE

Current leader: **XBOX**

We place Xbox ahead in this category almost exclusively because of Sam & Max 2! Again, the Xbox is perceived by developers as a safer platform for more mature titles such as Project Ego, the incredible new game from Black & White creator Peter Molyneux. Nintendo could still make a come-back here though.

XBOX

- A.I. Artificial Intelligence (MICROSOFT)
- Broken Sword 3: The Sleeping Dragon (TBA)
- Dino Crisis 3 (CAPCOM)
- Genma Onimusha (CAPCOM)
- Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (SIERRA)
- Project Ego (LIONHEAD GAMES)
- Sam & Max 2 (INFINITE MACHINE)
- Shenmue 2 (SEGA)
- Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams (KONAMI)

GAMECUBE

- Animal Forest (NINTENDO)
- Doshin The Giant (NINTENDO)
- Eternal Darkness (NINTENDO)
- Resident Evil Series (CAPCOM)



Silent Hill 2



Genma Onimusha

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REVIEWS

GAME OF
THE MONTH
»PS2



Metal Gear Solid 2

SONS OF LIBERTY

Snake returns to remind us just how good a videogame can actually be.

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GAME THEORY

DAVID
WILDOOSE



Many games attempt to tell a story. In fact, even in games where you might least expect it – a puzzle game, for instance – there's inevitably a narrative of some description. This is because a story is an effective method of enabling the player to gauge the progress he has made, and to offer an incentive to continue playing. I'm sure everyone's wondered, "What's going to happen next?" at some point in every game they've played.

No one is questioning whether this a good idea – the evidence suggests a consensus in favour of plot – but many game developers are still grappling with the issue of how to tell a story. The major problem is how to link narrative explication to the gameplay (i.e. the actions performed by the player). A story is inherently linear (at least, it is given current technology), while a videogame is interactive. Therefore, the challenge is how to shoehorn the former into the latter.

On the one hand, many developers present a simple plot – rescue the princess, kill the big evil guy – and mark the player's progression via the completion of action-packed levels which lead ever closer to the location of said princess or evil guy. Here, the story serves as a prompt for the next level or objective, but is for the most part superfluous. However peerless Ocarina of Time's gameplay achievements may be, its plot is utterly banal. But Miyamoto disguises this well by theming each location closely to the task at hand.

On the other hand, consider the Metal Gear Solid syndrome where the developer attempts to tell a grand narrative by labouring over lengthy cut-scenes to fill in the gaping plot holes. Here, the fundamental gameplay appears inadequate to reveal the true depth of the story. The switch from interactive to non-interactive scenes is jarring, a sensation often exacerbated by witnessing the main character perform actions in the latter that are unavailable to the player.

Ironically, I'm going to have to break for a cut-scene at this point, and resume this train of thought next issue...

Don't forget
hypergame.theory@hotmail.com



THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Wizardry 8 – PC
2. Project Gotham Racing – Xbox
3. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
4. Dead or Alive 3 – Xbox
5. Star Wars: Rogue Leader – GameCube

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. His Dark Materials Trilogy – Philip Pullman
2. Super Smash Bros Melee – GameCube
3. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
4. Medal of Honor: Allied Assault – PC
5. Dead or Alive 3 – Xbox

Malcolm Campbell – Art guy

1. Maximo: Ghosts to Glory – PS2
2. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
3. Super Smash Bros Melee – GameCube
4. Garou: Mark of the Wolves – DC
5. Bubble Bobble – Arcade

David Wildgoose – Writer

1. Metal Gear Solid – PSone
2. Silent Hill – PSone
3. Pro Evolution Soccer – PS2
4. Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance – PS2
5. Mario Tennis – Nintendo 64

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM

The Overall Score – what's it all about?

90+	Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!
80-89	Very good. This is a quality game, but not perfect.
70-79	Good, verging on average. Try before you buy.
60-69	Average, verging on bad. This game is badly flawed.
50-59	Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.
0-49	These games simply suck. A total waste of money!



Metal Gear Solid 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Konami >> PRICE: \$109.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: March 3 >>

FRANK DRY shows the world his solid snake... >> **P52**

It's been fifteen months since the launch of the PlayStation 2. Within that period, gamers have jubilantly celebrated the achievements of Gran Turismo 3, Devil May Cry, Silent Hill 2 and Grand Theft Auto 3. Yet when it comes down to it, every person with or without a PlayStation 2 knows that one final nomination for the title of "Greatest Game Ever" is being reserved for the game that staked a very early claim at E3 2000. You know the one we mean — you paid a good hundred bucks for the demo that came packed with the forgettable Zone of the Enders.

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty is finally upon us, and for many it will provide an immense sense of closure to all the hopes and promises made by Sony and its

development partners as to what the PlayStation 2 will ultimately provide. At the same time, it is also the sequel to one of the best games on the PSone, a game that defined that generation of gaming. However, this kind of expectation might sour the experience for those who are anticipating an all-conquering game of the year. Metal Gear Solid 2 could very well be the Game of the Year, but it's by no means a perfect game.

Snake Goes Freelance

In Metal Gear Solid 2, Solid Snake and his hacker buddy, Otacon, have gone into business for themselves. They've formed a covert espionage-for-hire group called Philanthropy, and have been given the nod by the United Nations to infiltrate a marine

transport ship carrying a prototype of the Metal Gear Ray. What's so important about the Metal Gear Ray? That takes us back to the original Metal Gear Solid. Back then, Solid Snake was given the task of destroying the Metal Gear Rex, a bipedal nuclear delivery platform. What made the Rex such a potent military device is not the fact that it is mobile, but that its rail gun enabled nuclear warheads to be propelled magnetically. The lack of a heat signature means the warheads can't be tracked by any traditional means. Mutual destruction between enemies is no longer assured if the other side doesn't know what's coming.

By the end of Metal Gear Solid, Solid Snake had destroyed the Rex and killed all the terrorists save

Revolver Ocelot, who made off with the plans for the Rex and sold them on the black market. Anyone, any country with a beef, could buy a copy of those plans and build their own Metal Gear Rex. The Ray was designed as a countermeasure to the Rex. It's amphibious, non-nuclear, and a much more potent weapon than the Rex. Unfortunately, by the time Snake makes it in to the tanker, a Russian mercenary group makes its own move for the Ray, lead by none other than Revolver Ocelot.

Most of this back-story can be gleaned from the demo. Beyond that, we're not going to reveal anything that could potentially





Get that swimming cap off your head!



Well, as long as you're using it...



This game gives me the ships.



Fancy another 20 laps?



spoil the plot, apart from what can be read from the instruction manual. To that end, it should be known that Solid Snake is not the main hero of this game. Metal Gear Solid 2 sees the introduction of a new hero, Raiden.

THE MORALITY OF WAR

Raiden is a rookie member of Snake's old special forces unit, Foxhound. He's meant to be a substitute for Solid Snake, but he's never been in any real-life combat situations before since his skills were taught completely through VR training. Players take control of Raiden at the Plant, about one-third into the game for the second of two



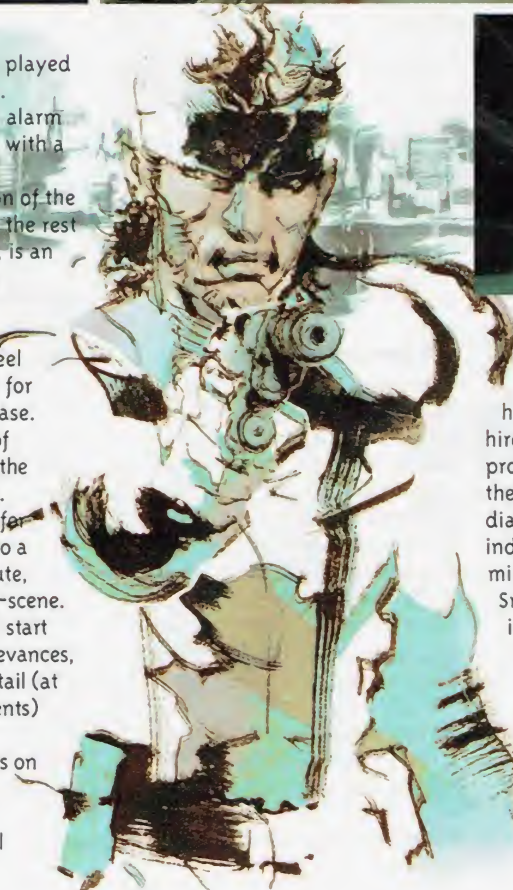
He's the only one who underwent the VR training. No one else can do it.

missions. The first mission is played as Solid Snake on the Tanker.

This alone should send off alarm bells in the minds of anyone with a good sense of narrative and scripting. Playing one section of the game as one character, then the rest as someone completely new, is an awful discontinuity that any sensible writer would try to avoid. The worst that can happen is that players will feel alienated and betrayed, but for most that shouldn't be the case.

This problem is indicative of numerous glaring faults with the scripting, editing and pacing. Often the game will break off for a long cut-scene, snap back to a little action for around a minute, then go into another long cut-scene. Often the main characters will start waxing lyrical about their grievances, explaining in unnecessary detail (at the most inappropriate moments) their grand plans for mass destruction and their thoughts on the morality of war.

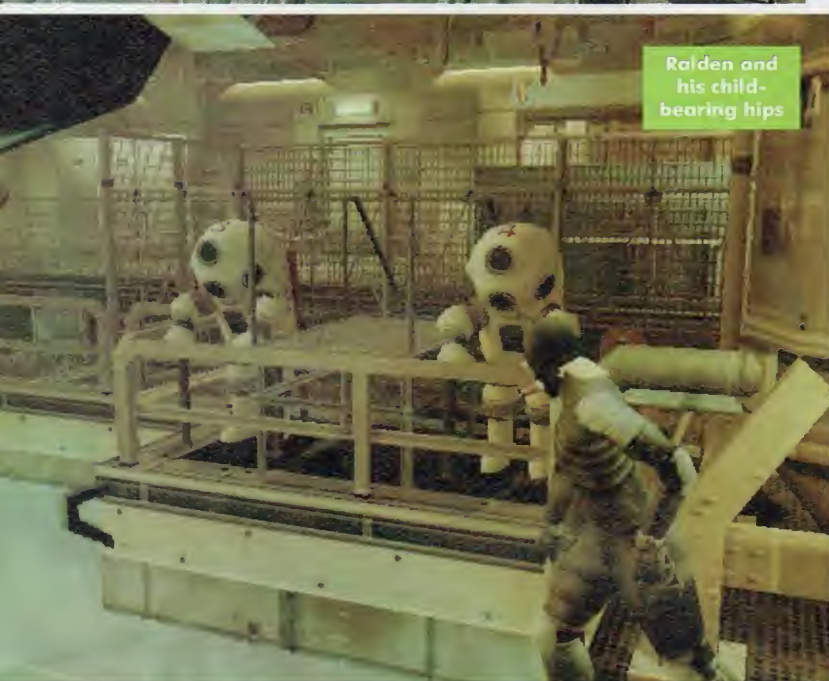
And why? Producer and director, Hideo Kojima is well



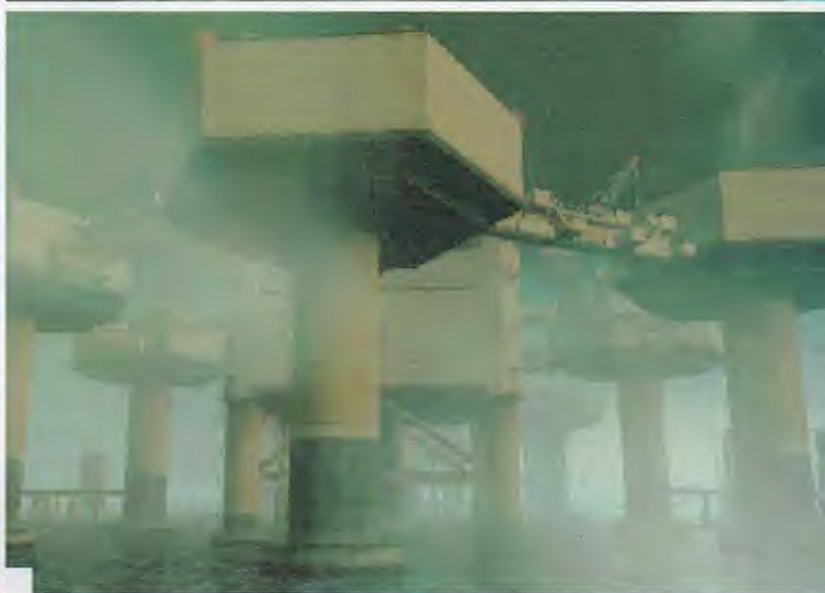
known for his love of Hollywood action films and his desire to emulate them in his games — partly the reason he hired Harry Gregson-Williams to produce the musical score — yet the overall delivery of the dialogue is immature and self-indulgent. On top of that, the military conspiracy that Solid Snake finds himself embroiled in is loaded with elaborate plot twists, many of them unbelievable, so much so that by the time you finish the game, you'll be left putting on your best Krusty the Clown voice and saying "What the Hell was that?" But let's not allow our



Raiden and his child-bearing hips



Raiden, sponsored by Maybelline



THE NEXT SOLDIER SNAKE KILLS COULD BE YOU!

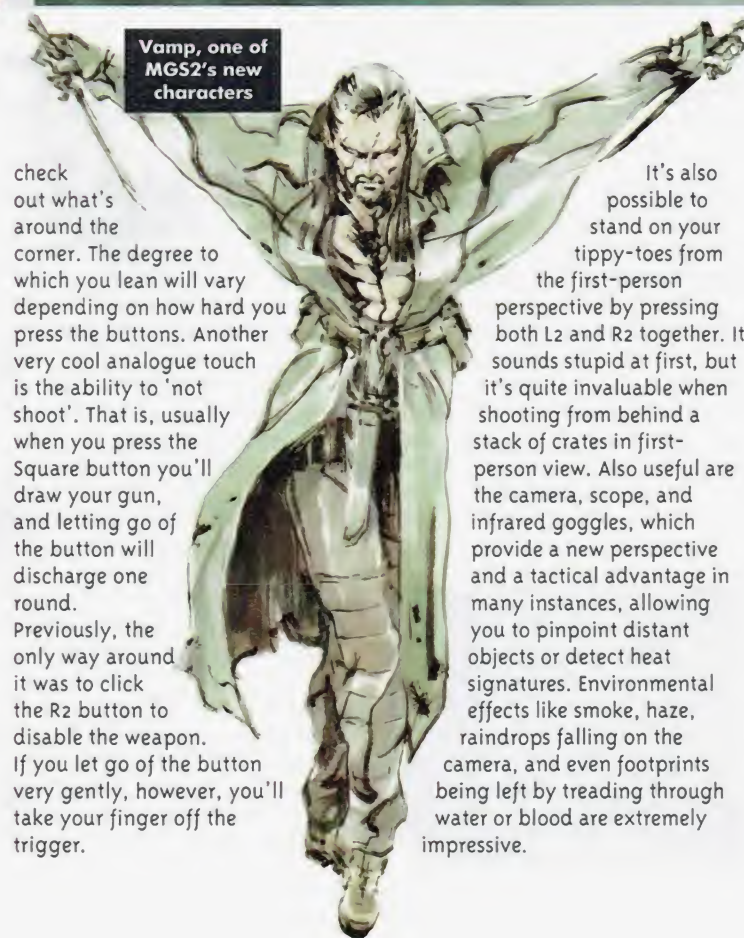
»» Prior to the American launch of Metal Gear Solid 2, around the time the demo was in high demand, Konami ran a little campaign at their Metal Gear Solid 2 website to collect name registrations. Apart from the usual suspicions of their collection of your personal data, the draw card was to have your name featured on one of the seventy-odd dog tags that can be collected in the game. If you hold up an enemy soldier with your USP or Socom, threaten them a little, or even beat them up, you'll be able to coerce them into handing over their dog tags. If you were one of the die-hard fans who signed up for this online promotion, there's a slight chance you'll come across a soldier with your name on his dog tags.

expectations to get the better of us. As much as we would've wished it to, Metal Gear Solid 2 doesn't achieve that elusive balance we're all looking for between passive narrative and next-generation interactivity. It isn't Lord of the Rings. It is, after all, just a game. And those bits that you do get to play are absolutely brilliant.

EXTREMELY IMPRESSIVE

Metal Gear Solid 2 sets a new standard for the industry to follow in crafting a game centred on stealth. From the top-down camera view, Snake can run, dive, crawl, and press himself up against walls. His weapons and gadgets can be snapped to active use by pressing the L2 and R2 buttons, or cycled through by holding them down. R1 brings the camera to first-person view, allowing you to see the gorgeously detailed 3D environments in all their glory.

From this perspective, as well as when pressed up against the wall, you can lean from side to side with the press of the shoulder button to



Vamp, one of MGS2's new characters

check out what's around the corner. The degree to which you lean will vary depending on how hard you press the buttons. Another very cool analogue touch is the ability to 'not shoot'. That is, usually when you press the Square button you'll draw your gun, and letting go of the button will discharge one round. Previously, the only way around it was to click the R2 button to disable the weapon. If you let go of the button very gently, however, you'll take your finger off the trigger.

It's also possible to stand on your tippy-toes from the first-person perspective by pressing both L2 and R2 together. It sounds stupid at first, but it's quite invaluable when shooting from behind a stack of crates in first-person view. Also useful are the camera, scope, and infrared goggles, which provide a new perspective and a tactical advantage in many instances, allowing you to pinpoint distant objects or detect heat signatures. Environmental effects like smoke, haze, raindrops falling on the camera, and even footprints being left by treading through water or blood are extremely impressive.



Quick! While they're doing Aerobics.



Now's not the time for a back rub.



"The wheels on the bus go round..."



you're not only cute, but smart too.

Which one is the girl?



SNAKE - such a casual killer.



So that's why you changed my code name.
...to girly man prancy boy?



Direct from the pigeon poo cam.



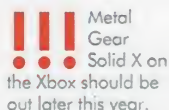
SNAKE shows us his mullet.



It's not all just for looks, though. If any enemy guard sees your footprints, he'll follow them. If you stand for too long in the rain, you catch a cold and sneeze very loudly at inappropriate moments, like around the corner from a sentry. For these uncomfortable moments, you can take some medicine, and tape up your wounds with bandages lest you bleed to death.

DEAD OR TRANQUILISED

Enemy AI has been markedly improved over the original Metal Gear Solid. Guards can be alerted by the mere presence of your shadow, and even if you're standing beyond their sight cones (as indicated on the radar), their suspicion will still be aroused if you stand directly in front of them. There remain a few minor inconsistencies, though. Most times they'll jump to action at the sound of a discharged firearm, or at the sight of a dead or tranquillised comrade. Other times, they're profoundly blind and deaf, and these instances will occur quite



Metal Gear Solid X on the Xbox should be out later this year.

If you stand in the rain, you catch a cold and sneeze very loudly at inappropriate moments, like around the corner from a sentry.

consistently no matter what difficulty level you're playing on.

The beauty of Metal Gear Solid 2 is not just the level of realism it achieves, but also the extra little touches that have been added for fun. On one hand, the realisation that you should shoot the spotlight in the back corner that's highlighting you to every guard on the deck is a telling sign that you must constantly think on your feet and use common sense. On the other hand, one can't help but take a moment to try a few chin-ups on the railing (R2+L2), toss guards off the boat, or laugh at the Benny Hill moments that range from monkey-spanking hilarity and golden showers to slipping over on massive gobs of bird shit.

There's around ten hours worth of gameplay in the first attempt. That's including fumbling around and getting your bearings. After that, it's a case of exploring through the extraordinarily flexible gameplay environments, discovering new and different ways of tackling the same problems over again, and collecting all the dog tags. We can only wish every game was at least as flexible, realistic, well-structured, and as well executed as Metal Gear Solid 2; and we can only wish that a game like Metal Solid 2 could've been scripted better. Either way, games like this rarely occur. If you own a PS2, there is no excuse for not owning Metal Gear Solid 2. It is a worthy, if open-ended sequel, and delivers nearly everything we could've hoped for.



PLUS: Multiple methods of tackling any problem.

MINUS: Narrative could've done with some serious editing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

94 92 96

OVERALL

96

It is the game you bought a PS2 for. If won't let you down.

REVIEW >>> HYPER 45

Hideo Kojima

A CHAT WITH KONAMI'S METAL GEAR SOLID CREATOR



The new computers expert /
cute-geeky-girl, Emma
Emmerich



HYPER: Do you think you achieved 100% of what you wanted to with MGS2?

Hideo Kojima: As for the construction of the game, it became pretty much like what was planned initially. However, I was not able to do even half of what I wanted to do. Since this is an action game, I had to avoid designing situations which would result in any slowdown due to the PS2's processing speed. The PS2 is not the magic box. What is important is prioritising what to do. Game design is about deciding what to leave in the game to make it fun within the given restrictions. There was an event in the game in which you try to move yourself through a flood. We really tried to include it in the game, but it ended up being dropped.

HYPER: What aspect of the game's creation caused most headaches?

HK: The fact that this was a sequel. The game had to be a MGS game but at the same time had to "betray" the player to a certain extent.

The game could not be a MGS2 that is simply better looking graphics-wise as a result of the shift from PSone to PS2. What is difficult with creating sequels is "destroying" people's expectations and perspectives of the game. Many people said that they liked the previous story and that they expected another good story. Honestly

speaking, I wanted to limit the storytelling and instead increase the joy

of the hide and seek factor. However, storytelling is a major aspect of MGS that makes MGS2 what it is. As a result, I introduced a larger-scale story with many twists. It was a big decision.

HYPER: Which part of the game do you never tire of playing or watching other people play?

HK: The hide and seek interaction with enemy soldiers. You can do many, many things in many, many situations. And if you try to collect all the dogtags, you will find yourself enjoying the game in a very different way.

HYPER: How do you expect gamers to react to the biggest twist in the game? What kind of reaction were you trying to provoke?

HK: Those who have played the previous game will most likely be shocked. You will get to appreciate how cool and great Solid Snake really is.

HYPER: MGS2 sees the introduction of several new characters, such as Vamp and Olga. Were there any new characters that didn't actually make it into the finished game (like the character El Mariachi who didn't make it into MGS)?

HK: There were guys called Chinaman and Oldman that did not make it in the game.

HYPER: Early in the game's development, we were warned



that MGS2 "questions the effects of digitisation of society", and that your script sounds the alarm for the digital society and digital culture. Could you explain how and why?

HK: One thing about the digitisation of society. In human history, people passed on information to future generations through their genes and through means of communication. What was passed on through communication was by word of mouth, writing, etc. Over generations, the contents of the communication changed gradually, just like the mixing of genes. In a highly digitized society, none of the content is lost or changed. All information, whether necessary or unnecessary, is stored perfectly and eternally. The game is



Snake checks his pulse. Yep, still living.



about the balance between information passed on through our genes and information that cannot be passed on through our genes.

HYPER: You've now set a new benchmark. How do you anticipate games moving on from here?

HK: From a storytelling standpoint, what I did in MGS2 is a kind of taboo within the games industry. The story is one that can be told in a game only, and the same is true with the biggest twist. The same cannot be done again. In that sense this game is indeed a benchmark.

As online games become more popular, there will be two kinds of games: communication-based games with more freedom and games with less freedom but with everything prepared by the creator. The former serves as a toy or playground and the latter serves as a story-telling film.

HYPER: If there was an add-on device for PS2 that would enhance the Metal Gear experience, what would it be?

HK: A voice recognition microphone. Using the Codec with the SELECT button is cumbersome. If

What I did in Metal Gear Solid 2 is kind of taboo within the games industry.

you can call a name to talk to a particular person on the Codec, that would be cool.

HYPER: Do you wake up in the night with ideas for new games and then quickly scribble them down? Can you ever truly switch off?

HK: Ideas pop up any time of the day - even in my dreams when I'm asleep. All I have to do is live my life 24 hours a day. I don't have to force myself to think. That's why I try to stay away from driving my car as much as possible. When I was a child, I mistakenly stepped into ditches because of this. Ideas come 24 hours a day. I never switch off.

The next step is to intentionally confine myself to concentrate and think about my ideas to make them real. Scenes with characters pop up all the time. However, I do not think about how these scenes would be a

part of my game. Ideas are a part of my everyday life. The details that follow are part of my job that I work on in the office. As for ideas, I do not jot them down on a piece of paper. I leave it up to natural selection within my brain. Great ideas remain in me. I would not forget them. It's the bad ideas that I end up forgetting. On the other hand, I do scribble down specification details. I'll record myself talking if I'm taking a walk. Since a lot of my scribbling contains diagrams along with text, I use paper. I do not use digital memo devices.

HYPER: If you could take one game, one movie and one personal item onto a desert island, what would they be?

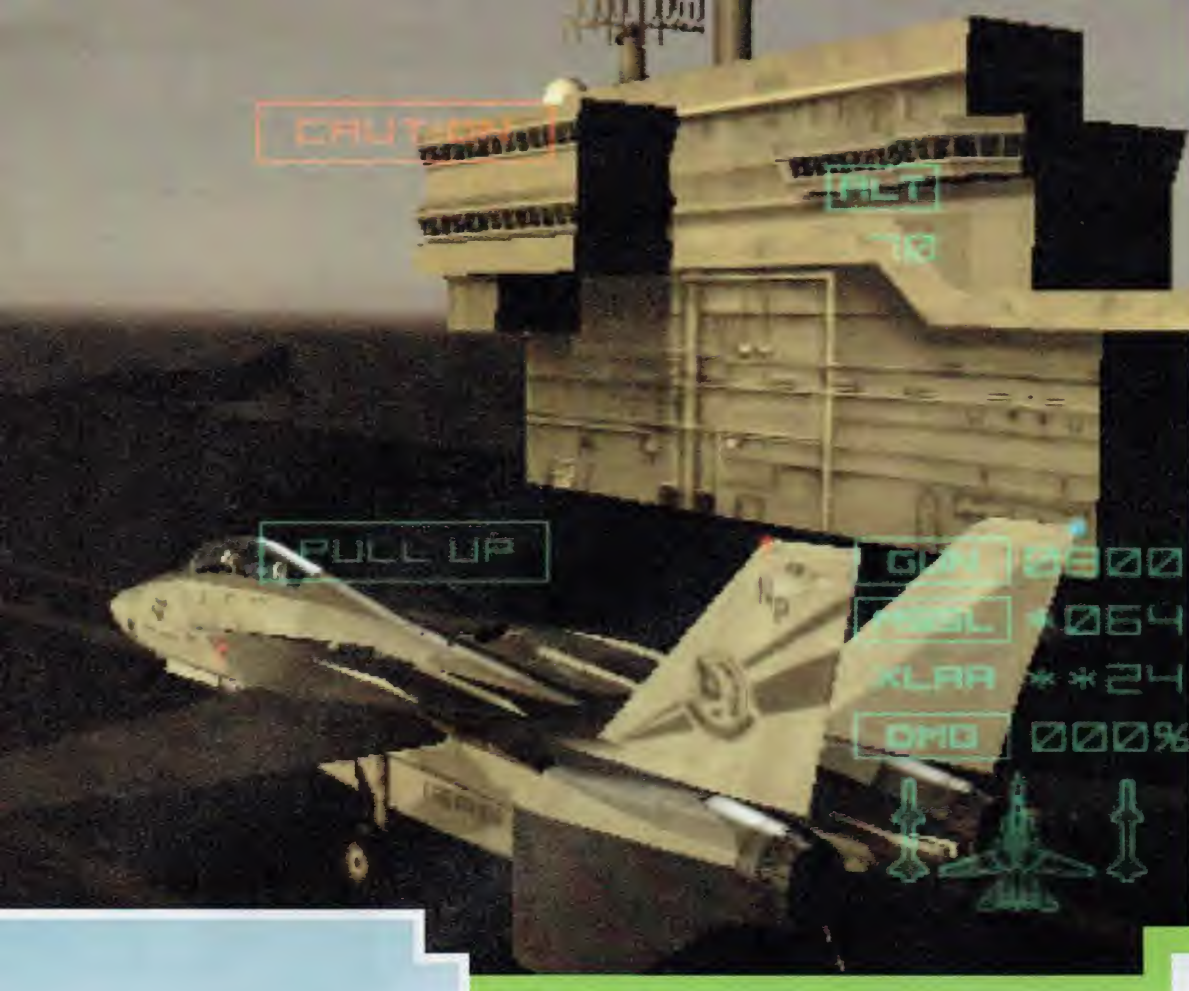
HK: All I want is my son. I don't need anything else. I'll create my own entertainment. <<<



(top) star of the demo, Olga Gurlukovich; (above) Otacon. Nerd. Has pet parrot.



Solid Snake. Now part of the Metal Gear destruction group, "Philanthropy".



Ace Combat: DISTANT THUNDER

CATEGORY: Combat Flight Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

>> P52

CAM SHEA picks off a particularly nasty bogie...

Istant Thunder is the latest in Namco's excellent Ace Combat series. The first three games appeared on PlayStation and impressed many a gamer with their varied missions and good balance between arcade and realistic elements. The fourth retains the tried and true gameplay of the previous games but wraps it in a prettier shell with an interesting storyline to boot.

The game is set in the fictional Eugea, and the story is told through the eyes of a child living in the war-torn town of San Salvacion. It's an effective technique, weaving parallels between this child's view of things with yours as a fighter in the war, and is presented beautifully through lush anime-style still frames.

DOING ICEMAN AND MAVERICK PROUD... BUT SCREW GOOSE.

There are 18 missions in all, and they range from your basic escort missions to intercepting nuclear tipped cruise missiles. The missions are satisfyingly varied and almost always entertaining, plus, beating missions gives you cash which can be spent on new planes and weaponry. Whoo! There are 21 playable planes in all, ranging from the F-4 and F-5 through to the F-22, MiG-29A, SU-35 and F-15 Active, each with several (often specialty) secondary weapons to purchase as well. And once you beat the game, there's the option of starting over again, with all the planes you've already unlocked. There's definitely

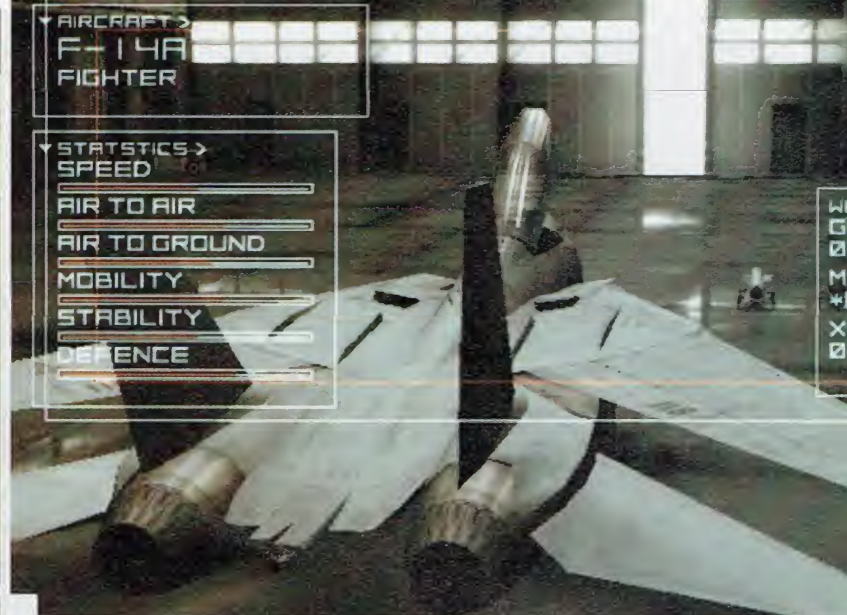


some replay value here.

It's rare that one gets excited about the graphics in a flight sim, but this is one of those occasions. Ace Combat is definitely a step up from all other console combat flight sims in terms of visuals. Your half-blind grandmother could be forgiven for thinking she was watching actual wartime footage when this game's on. The patchwork fields, the sun reflecting off the ocean, the craggy outlines of islands, the cityscapes, the

snow covered mountain peaks, they all look pretty damn real. Of course, getting in too close reveals some blurry textures that shatter the illusion, but when you're on high this is a sweet looking game. More importantly, Ace Combat 04 can draw





Damn, no buildings to fly into.



Can you spot the camouflaged plane?



I strapped \$3 to the missile.



Accordion factory targeted, sir.



AHOY THERE CAP'N

✂ You're frequently going into missions with several allied fighters, and in general the cockpit to cockpit dialogue is excellent. Particularly impressive is the amount of mission specific dialogue that makes mention of targets or events. Sometimes the dialogue misses the mark somewhat, however, and instead of strengthening your resolve will leave you in fits of laughter. For instance, going into the very first mission, your team leader says something like "Well gentlemen, today is my birthday, and a victory sure would be a good way to celebrate". Yeah, good one mate.

✂ Your half-blind grandmother could be forgiven for thinking she was **watching actual wartime footage** when this game's on.

these huge environments, then cap them all off with realistic weather effects, countless other craft all dogfighting around you, your own extremely detailed craft complete with afterburner effects and environmental reflections, and plenty of action on the ground too, without the frame rate skipping a beat.

YOU CAN RIDE MY TAIL ANYTIME

Distant Thunder just has so much polish in every area. Your HUD is minimal but functional so there's no effort required to see where other planes are on your radar, whether you've taken any damage and how many missiles you have left. Each of the 21 playable

!!! Namco are also working on a new Smash Court Tennis for PS2!

craft in the game are modelled in great detail, whether they're classic fighters or prototype planes, and each even has their own individually modelled cockpit, which really helps personalise each plane... although you'd have to be nuts to attempt some missions from the cockpit view. Even small touches like peering around with the right analogue stick and the ability to track missiles all the way to their target help keep you in control at all

times. It all reeks of a high quality product — and well it should, being the fourth game in the series. Ace Combat 04 doesn't really do anything revolutionary, but as a package it will most definitely satisfy fans of the series, as well as drawing new players in. ✂



PLUS: Variety in missions, impressive visuals.

MINUS: A little on the short side.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 87 89

OVERALL

89

Ace Combat has everything fans of the series could want.

REVIEW

»HYPER 49



How 'bout a short back and sides?



Hmm, yes you'll need fillings.



Jedi Master Kain

Soul Reaver 2

>>PS2

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

DAVID WILDGOOSE fangs us for giving him this one...

Cliffhanger endings are a well-trodden path in the realm of television. Yet how many game developers have the luxury of knowing the game they're working on is guaranteed a sequel that allows them such an ending? Well, Crystal Dynamics, for one, and they've repaid Eidos' faith with a competent and satisfying sequel to Soul Reaver.

The original ended with hero Raziel's arch-nemesis, Kain, escaping through a time-streaming portal and fleeing the climactic showdown. Raziel duly follows him through, tumbling centuries into Nosgoth's past, and thus the scene is set.

MYTHICAL SWORDS

Like the first Soul Reaver, Raziel is capable of a wide range of intuitive and agile movements (jumping, gliding, pushing objects) in addition to an extensive melee and ranged combat repertoire (replete with third-person lock-on and over-the-shoulder targeting options). The ability to shift between the Material and Spectral realms remains intact, enabling Raziel to experience the world from two planes of existence and take

advantage of their differences.

There are some breathtaking outdoor vistas to behold, with each awesome major structure housing several gorgeously detailed chambers within its walls. With little noticeable loading times, it all adds up to a skilfully crafted and believable world, let down only by the dull paths linking the areas together.

Raziel's journey through this world is structured by long, dialogue-based cut-scenes with the other main characters and by his quest to re-forged the Soul Reaver itself, the eponymous mythical sword. The story lends a barebones context for the numerous enemies Raziel faces, but fails to provide a convincing rationale for their murderous demeanour or regular presence. Too often combat situations are so contrived — doors locking until all foes have been defeated (or worse, artificial doors appearing with the enemies!) — it seems as if they're there just for the sake of it. What we have here is an increasing tiresome device employed to lengthen play and offer an obstacle to the next cut-scene.

PLANE-SHIFTING

Indeed, while the combat is rarely integrated into the overall narrative, the intricate puzzles at the heart of the game do well to compensate.

However, it's disappointing to note the sparse use of the Spectral realm. Raziel spends most of his time in the Material realm, plane-shifting occasionally to pass through a locked portcullis or leap atop a now-accessible pillar. The obviousness of the necessity of these shifts mean there's little sense of discovery. Of course, it could be argued the original game suffered from too much wandering around and shifting to the other plane just to see if anything was different. But the sequel has gone too far to remove such frustration when a more considered balance between the two games would be vastly preferable.

Soul Reaver 2 is an accomplished, albeit unexciting, title. It doesn't end on a cliffhanger, but rather wraps up the tale in a suitably dramatic conclusion that makes the journey there thoroughly worthwhile. <<<



PLUS: Visceral combat mixed with thought-provoking puzzles.

MINUS: Occasionally dull, with missed opportunities.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 75 80

OVERALL

82

An absorbing tale throughout a cohesive and beautiful world.



PaRappa the Rapper 2 >>PS2

CATEGORY: Rapping Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Sony >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Late Feb >>

Like PaRappa, **CAM SHEA** is a two dimensional rapper...

Chances are that you either love or hate the PaRappa the Rapper games. The Hyper and PCPP crews, for instance, love them for their quirky originality, excellent soundtracks, funny rhymes, great voice casting and funky vibe. The rest of the office, however, seem to be in the hate 'em category... and who could blame them having to listen to "snip, snip, cut, snip, snip" all day?

HAIRDRESSER OCTOPUS ROCKS DA HOUSE!

Despite our love affair for all things PaRappa, this is a disappointing sequel. PaRappa on PS2 is almost exactly the same as it was all those years ago (it came out in 1996 in Japan) on PSone. While we've spent the intervening years dreaming of what could be done with the PaRappa concept, it seems that no one at Sony Japan has been doing likewise. Indeed, PaRappa 2 is aimed squarely at younger gamers and firmly at novelty value. Fair enough, but they're missing out on a veritable gameplay goldmine.

PaRappa is really just a glorified game of Simon Says. Simply copy the

teacher's rhymes until you complete the stage. Then repeat eight times. Yes, there are only eight stages (the original had only six), but this isn't the crux of the problem. What's annoying is that once it's over there's very little reason to play through it again. We wanted to see alternate sets of rhymes for each stage, or some kind of system for creating your own rhymes. After all, the lyrics are about inane subjects like romantic karate and cutting people's hair, so it wouldn't be too hard to put together some alternate sets.

The coolest aspect of PaRappa 2 is the two-player mode where you and a friend go head-to-head rhyming a line back and forth until one of you is awarded (or loses) enough points. For a while this is dope as it affords you the opportunity to really muck around with cutting up and remixing a sentence, but the fun is short-lived as there are simply no options. You should be able to pick from a large database of rhymes and intonations, select their order, how long each

round lasts, and so forth. As an example of the potential, you can hold (left) on the D-Pad to repeat the first word if one button triggers two or more words. Let's say that pressing X twice triggers "cut/it up". If you press X four times by holding left on the first two presses you'll get "cut/cut/cut/it up" instead of "cut/it up/cut/it up". This is cool to muck around with, but there was room to implement more features along these lines.

!!! De La Soul have a track on PaRappa, and a great new album "Bionix". Get it.

A BIT OF FUN

We saw the original PaRappa as a concept with enormous potential. Forget following what your guide says to the letter — cut it up, create your own rhymes... it shouldn't matter, as long as it's rhythmic. We were hoping that the sequel would be more of an exercise in freestyling and sound manipulation, but we were wrong. It seems that Sony only regard the PaRappa license as a bit of fun. What a shame. And for the full price of \$99.95 we find it hard to recommend. <<<



PLUS: It's PaRappa! The light-hearted humour, 3D afros.

MINUS: Too short, wasted potential.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 89 73

OVERALL

80

Brimming with vitality but lacking in gameplay.

REVIEW

>>HYPER 51



Moto GP 2

>>PS2

CATEGORY: Racing Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Sony >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA is still waiting for the first Segway Human Transporter sim...

The original Moto GP was relatively well received by gamers, but in truth it wasn't a particularly exciting title. Now that the PS2 software line-up is practically bursting at the seams with racing game goodness, have Namco done enough to ensure that Moto GP 2 will stand out?

MURKY MIDDLE-GROUND

Well, they've done some things right. The game has the full FIM Road Racing World Championship license, so all the teams and riders are fully authentic. Plus, one of the chief complaints from the original (that there were only five courses) has been rectified somewhat, as there are now ten — and they're all faithful recreations of actual championship circuits. Even so, it's strange for a game that purports to be something of a sim to simply omit six courses from the proper season. In fact, this decision is symbolic of the game as a whole. Nothing is really taken to its logical conclusion, and as a result Moto GP 2 is neither a sim or an arcade game, but some murky middle ground in-between.

Moto GP 2 certainly isn't a bad

game, and sim fans will initially be impressed by the realistic tactics needed to win races and to stay on the track — sticking to the racing line, and breaking and accelerating judiciously. Unfortunately, this is about as deep as it gets. Contact between bikes is grossly simplified. Sometimes you can bump another rider at top speed and nothing happens, other times you'll both come off. Indeed, the only real difference between arcade and sim mode seems to be how easily you can come off your bike.

The riders and bikes look quite good, but there's nothing too inspiring in the visuals — just solid, clean graphics, and some decent rain effects. When racing in the wet, vision is severely impaired, and any racers in front of you will kick up a realistic looking spray. Wet mode also drastically alters the gameplay, making racing very tenuous indeed.

CAM'S HANDLE BAR

There are a few graphical downsides, including flickering in

the distance and some terrible texture tearing on the sand/grass off the course. The lack of aliasing, however, is a definite plus. There are only two camera perspectives to choose from — third person or first person, which is disappointing, as a handle bar cam may have been a good way to get players more immersed in the action. We should also mention that the sensation of speed isn't all that compelling.

Moto GP 2 has all the standard racing modes, with the Challenge mode being a highlight. Although there's a two-player mode, you can't race through the season in this mode, or with a full grid. It's head to head only, which is hardly satisfying. A proper season based two-player mode would have

made this game much more appealing for fans of the genre. Namco should have made this either a full-on, get your hands dirty sim, or gone all-out arcade. The middle ground approach simply doesn't work. <<<

!!! A MotoGP is coming to the Xbox. Except, it's a completely different MotoGP!



PLUS: Perversely satisfying racing. Smooth framerates.

MINUS: So many better racers out there to choose from.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 79 72

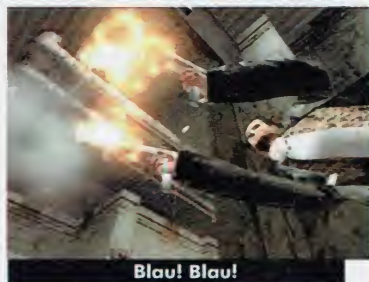
OVERALL

72

An average sequel to an average game.



Blau!



Blau! Blau!



BLAU!



Max Payne

>>PS2

CATEGORY: Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Take 2 >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

ELIOT FISH squints his eyes one too many times.

I woke up with my head throbbing like it'd been hit with an expertly wielded Xbox console. My mouth was dry; the taste of last night's gin tucked away behind my teeth and the corners of my lips cracked like granny's over-cooked cookies. One minute I was blowing away drug-dealing scum at frame-rates my eyes couldn't even perceive, the world around me crisp and colourful, my feet moving like Gene Kelly; and now the world seemed somehow stiff. My vision was jerky, my feet about as skilled as Jerry Lewis. It seemed like I'd woken up in some crazy console port.

EAT MY BLAU!

Max Payne on the PC was raw entertainment. It wasn't clever, original, or challenging, but it was a huge amount of fun and heavily stylised. As a third-person shooter it was surprisingly easy to control and featured a very powerful bullet-time effect that was not only simple to use, but it pushed the happy button for all it was worth. The transition to the PS2 has not been a hugely favourable one.

Whilst the core of the game is intact, the PS2 struggles to deliver the same kind of seamless entertainment as Max Payne did on the PC. Loading times are always the bane of any gamer looking to immerse themselves in a game world, and sadly, Max Payne is packed full of loading times. The game has to load all the small comic-book style cutscenes during play, and the developers have had to break down the big levels in the PC version into smaller easier-to-manage chunks on the PS2, so there's loading of new areas within the levels. This really makes Max Payne on the PS2 such a stop and start experience that it doesn't immerse you nearly as much as it does on the PC, and as a result, the game never really builds up the same kind of tension or momentum.

STILL GRIMACING

Because of the detail in the game, the PS2 also seems to have a problem keeping the gameplay smooth at all times. A bit of chug

here, a bit of chug there, and for some reason, simply walking down hallways feels stiff and at times "sticky". Where aiming on the PC was smooth and accurate thanks to mouse control, the analogue stick makes aiming — even in bullet time — a somewhat clumsy experience. To aid this, the developers have added an auto-aim, meaning that even if you're not really aiming at your target, they seem to cop your burst of buckshot anyhow. Hmm.

The game still looks pretty close to the PC version, although the characters seem to consist of fewer polygons. However, most of the environmental details and textures appear to be the same, so the world still looks as cool as it ever did.

In an overall sense, Max Payne on the PS2 is worse than the PC version, but it still packs a pretty satisfying punch. If you can overlook its console-inherited flaws, Max Payne will still bring a smile to your face. Or a carrot-up-the-arse grimace. <<<

!!! There is another version of Max Payne coming to the Xbox. Looks sweet.



PLUS: Bullet-time action! Amusingly over-the-top gunplay.

MINUS: Sticky controls, and camera jerking = headaches.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

84 85 83

OVERALL

82

A flawed port, but there's a good game in there.

REVIEW

>>HYPER 53



Medal of Honor: ALLIED ASSAULT

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII-500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

CAM SHEA whoops some serious Nazi BLAU! >> **PC**

A little over two years ago, Medal of Honor surfaced on PlayStation to rave reviews. It was heralded as the PlayStation's long awaited answer to Goldeneye — a First Person Shooter that enveloped the player in its world through clever design and gameplay that wasn't purely twitch-based. Now that the series has made its way to the PC, with a new development team and the Quake 3 engine, what can it hope to achieve in the already mature world of PC First Person Shooters? Well the answer, ironically enough, is to bring back a little old school action to our monitors.

AUTHENTIC NOT REALISTIC?

Although set to a backdrop of real-world events, Electronic Arts have taken the path towards mainstream

success by crafting an instantly accessible, linear and simplistic game. Indeed, Allied Assault represents quite an odd concoction of elements. On the one hand, it has regenerating enemies and on-rails action sequences. On the other hand, most of the scenarios are plucked straight from history, and the weaponry used throughout the game is faithful to the time period, as are the uniforms and plenty of other incidental detail. An odd concoction certainly, but one of the key words EA have been using to describe the game is "authentic". They're not looking to recreate a "realistic" WWII experience, just an "authentic" one. Fair enough we say — gameplay's gotta come first.

Medal of Honor takes place between 1942 and 1945, and will take

you across a diverse cross section of the war, from storming Omaha beach, to the frozen tundra of Norway, to sniper shoot-outs in the gutted shell of the once quaint French village Brest. The gameplay is also broken up well. In some missions you're accompanied by a squad of allied fighters, whereas another may be a solo mission where you have to use stealth to get deep inside Nazi territory. In yet another you may take control of a tank to unleash some serious destruction. Regardless, the





They'll even **pull cheeky moves like sticking their gun up** out of their hiding spot and spraying off a few rounds in the hope that they'll hit you.

missions are generally linear and short - you'll never be in any doubt as to what to do. What keeps the game entertaining, however, is the compelling action and the steady pacing. Developers 2015 have ensured that the action rarely lets up, so you're always on your toes.

The arcadey nature of the gameplay can be viewed as a blessing or a curse. Take, for

instance, the semi-regular on-rails action sequences during the game. You might, for instance, be manning a gun on the back of a jeep in a mission to destroy an airfield and then escape. The sequence is almost laughably simple - point your gun at the planes and men running at you and kill everything. In one way it's the developers taking a shortcut from delivering something more

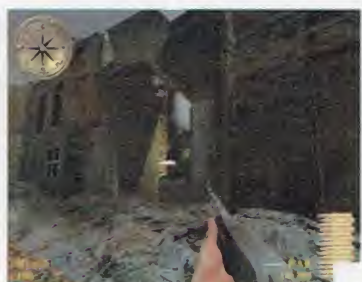
compelling. On the other, it's a nice way to break up the action, and hey, it doesn't last too long, so even if you don't like it, there's no real reason to whinge.

ART OF THE RELOAD

Similarly, some levels tend to be heavily scripted from start to finish, so when you're storming the beaches at Normandy, for instance, there's no freedom to try a different approach - you must conform to the checkpoints built in to the level. Although restrictive, the sheer intensity of the experience still managed to win us over. Other levels are a little more free form, giving an illusion of freedom that, whilst only an illusion, combines with some great set pieces and enemy AI to produce an engaging experience.

ICH BIN EIN SPRINGFIELD SWAP MEET PATRON

One of the most impressive elements of both the previous Medal of Honor games was the sound, and Allied Assault keeps that tradition very much alive. The full orchestral score by series veteran Michael Giacchino sets the scene beautifully without dominating too much, and the sound effects are superb. Sound is used as a much more integral part of the experience than in most FPSs. You really have to listen to the dialogue between officers on the battlefield, as they'll give you mission updates and advice. Oh, and we should also mention that the fact that the Nazis speak German in Medal of Honor makes a big difference to the atmosphere. Have at you Wolfenstein!





Contributing to Medal of Honor's arcade feel, the game is almost bereft of "puzzles". Objectives within missions are stupidly simple. Any time plans need to be stolen, or wires need to be cut on transport vehicles, the respective papers/wires are highlighted in flashing red so

KILLING IS MY BUSINESS... AND BUSINESS IS GOOD.

» All the Medal of Honor games have had the same military adviser - Captain Dale Dye, and it's largely thanks to him that Medal of Honor is so authentic in look and sound. Captain Dale Dye was also, incidentally, the military adviser on Saving Private Ryan, so he knows his stuff. In addition to keeping everything grounded in reality, he even put the development team through "boot camp" style training - complete with live fire using WWII vintage weapons.

that there's no doubt as to what you're looking for. And all non-shooting tasks can be achieved with the one generic "use" key. In fact, this version of Medal of Honor actually seems to be more simplistic in terms of mission objectives than the original PlayStation game.

The game world isn't very interactive, either. Aside from objects/items that are directly related to your set of tasks and goals, or the progression of the mission, everything else feels very static. For instance, you can shoot out the massive spotlights that are sweeping throughout various areas in the game, but shooting out a light bulb inside? Uh-uh, ain't gonna happen. The authenticity of the surroundings is really let down by the feeling that you can only look, but not touch.

The range of weapons, whilst nothing out of the ordinary, work brilliantly thanks to their vintage authenticity. One of the most engaging elements of Allied Assault

!!! Medal Of Honor and MOH: Underground scored 81% and 90% respectively.

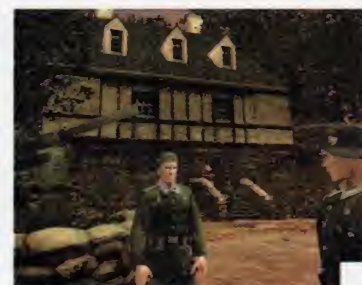
is learning the limits of your weaponry and playing within those limits. Reloads, for instance, become a hugely important factor,

as many of the weapons take a realistic length of time to reload, so you have to be conscious of it all the time. In fact, an integral part of a successful battle strategy in Medal of Honor is in the art of the reload.

RUN LIKE HELL

All the weapons in the game have their place, but for our money you just can't go past the Springfield '03 Sniper Rifle. Sure, sniper rifles are the single biggest cliché in FPS

gaming today, but when they're this much fun, who cares? Take the sniper town level... Making your way through the ruins of a small French village and the hollow remains of a church, exchanging fire with well-positioned enemy snipers hidden in countless buildings along the now deserted streets. You're ducking behind cars, darting from hiding spot to hiding spot, and trying to draw the enemy out. Levels like these really put you right into the action. The enemy soldiers provide a good challenge on hard too, and the whole experience is capped off by the sound effects. The whipping crack of the sniper rifle in particular. Every time it's fired the report





Enemy nose targeted, sir!



"Now... where's Castle Wolfenstein?"



Looks like they dropped the A-bomb.



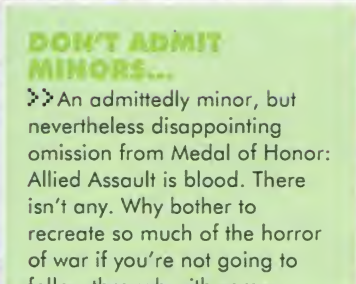
Whose bedroom shall we look into?



A distinct lack of targets...



"Say goodbye on a night like this..."



DON'T ADMIT MINORS...

>>An admittedly minor, but nevertheless disappointing omission from Medal of Honor: Allied Assault is blood. There isn't any. Why bother to recreate so much of the horror of war if you're not going to follow through with some serious bloodletting? Why not simply include an option to turn on/off the blood? Why does it make that much of a difference to the perceived violence in a game whether a dying person spews blood from every orifice or not? I mean popping someone in the head is kind of the meal – the blood is just the dressing. Oh well.

ricochets through the quiet streets –atmosphere in a boom-stick.

Medal of Honor also features some very reasonable AI – both for enemies and for your squad members. Enemies will use their surroundings in a tactical way,



Tanks for the ride!



The authenticity of the surroundings is really let down by the feeling that **you can only look, but not touch.**

looking for cover, spreading out and even trying to outsmart you by moving from one spot to another when they know you can't see them. They'll also react intelligently to a grenade being lobbed in their vicinity (run like hell), communicate with one another and run to set off alarms when you're spotted. They'll even pull cheeky moves like sticking their gun up out of their hiding spot and spraying off a few rounds in the hope that they'll hit you. Plus, you'll be up against 22 or so different types of Nazi, each with their own skills and AI level, which makes it all the more challenging.

Although Allied Assault introduces an all new hero to the Medal of Honor world (Lt. Mike Powell), there are plenty of tie-ins to events/characters from the previous two games for fans of the series.

Developers 2015 have walked the fine line between fun and realism quite deftly with Allied Assault. It isn't a groundbreaking game, but it's not really trying to be either. What they've done is to incorporate realistic elements for

entertainment's sake, not for realism's sake – an important distinction. In many ways, the simplicity of Medal of Honor's gameplay, coupled with the vivid detail in surroundings, harks

back to heroic tales of War – not the reality of war. This is the swashbuckling, daredevil, propaganda portrayal of war, and it's a whole lot of fun. <<<



PLUS: Good, clean violence. Compelling action.

MINUS: A little short. Shooting German Shepherds is not fun.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 91 83

OVERALL

87

Allied Assault may be simple, but it grabs you by the balls

REVIEW

>>HYPER 57



Ghost Recon

>>PC

CATEGORY: FPS/Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-36 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII-450, 128MB RAM

STEVE POLAK gets all spooky on us...

You know the drill. Join the army, travel the world, meet interesting people and kill them. Well this aptly describes what happens in Ghost Recon, easily one of the best squad-based FPS action offerings to see the light of day.

SENSATIONAL EFFECTS

Picking up where games like Rogue Spear and Operation Flashpoint have left off, the game sees you controlling a squad of highly trained killing machines, venturing into some extremely hostile enemy territory where the one thing you do know for certain is that you will always be seriously outnumbered.

This basic formula may be something we have seen more than a few times before, but Ghost Recon manages to deliver this familiar

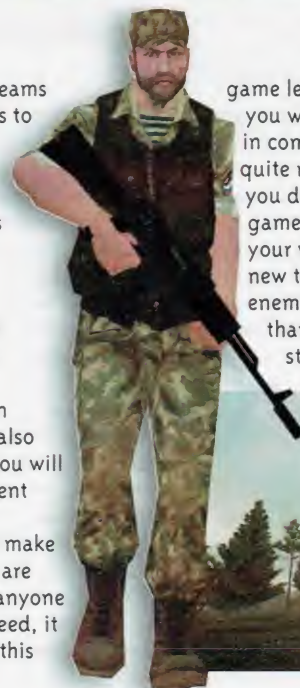
cocktail with more flair and skill than ever before.

You and your team of hand-picked recruits are trying to stop the hard line communists retaking the independent republics that broke away from the Soviet Union from being annexed and reabsorbed. You do this by taking out bridges which slow down the Soviets, whilst defending the fighters who are trying to halt the Russian advance. There are also search and rescue missions and a host of different and superbly realised environments for you to explore. There are night missions, urban missions, missions in the rain and some great wide-open country areas for you to fight in. The environments look great and sound even better.

Controlling your teams using numerical keys to select them is very easy, and for the most part, tasks like assigning waypoints and giving basic movement orders (suppress assault reconnaissance etc.) is a simply a button press away.

Switching between individual troops is also pretty simple, and you will need to direct different troops in different locations at times to make sure your objectives are carried out without anyone getting minced. Indeed, it is mighty good that this

game lets you quick save — you will find you have a lot in common with Swiss cheese quite regularly. Especially if you don't learn to play the game cautiously, working your way forward, exploring new territory by clearing enemies out gradually rather than rushing in Rambo style. This isn't as





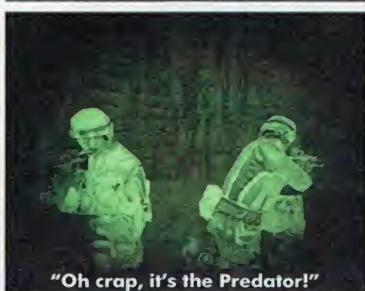
"Nawun touches maw's cheekins!"



Look, I made a cubby house!



Knee deep in the dead.



"Oh crap, it's the Predator!"

tedious as you may think – commanding your snipers is great fun and they have massive range, making for some fun strategic play. Just beware, as a missed hit on an enemy will surely result in a hail of incoming fire.

Indeed, one aspect of the game that really impresses is how smart your foes are. Make sure you keep your head down and don't roam about the place like you own it. In this regard there are different stances you can adopt, with simply standing upright being the best for movement, but pretty risky in other regards as you present a huge target. It is often wiser to crouch or crawl when things get really hot.

CLEVERLY COORDINATED

Whilst realism is a big draw-card here, small features such as the "enemy radar" in the bottom of the screen may irk some gamers as it destroys some of the tension, whilst also making the game easier to play. Still, this doesn't remove



Ghost Recon supports up to 36 players in four nine-player teams, making for some truly great LAN play.

You will **become attached to your squad** quickly... successful missions will see them being given medals and skill points.

the difficulty in controlling your squad successfully and preventing civilian casualties or whatever the mission objectives may be. There are similarities here to Operation Flashpoint, however you'll find that you're manually taking control of specific soldiers more often than

you may like, just to get them to do something the way you want it.

As you progress, you will become quite attached to your squad, as successful missions

will see them being given medals, and more importantly, skill points which you can spend to increase their abilities in the field. There are also different weapon load outs you can choose depending on the

demands of a particular sortie.

There are a few minor flaws in Ghost Recon, but nothing too horrid. Sometimes you'll find your guys wander into the field of fire when you'd rather they didn't put themselves at risk, or on occasion they take down the enemy before you even know where they are, but managing your squads more closely will prevent this. Anal-retentive gamers rejoice!

There are a motherlode of great gameplay moments in Ghost Recon, such as when you spike the opposition with cleverly coordinated cross fires and frontal assaults with silenced weapons of sniper fire. Overall, this is easily one of the best tactical squad based efforts you will ever see. <<



PLUS: Suspense and realism, involving gameplay.

MINUS: You must be patient, which could turn action-fans off.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 90 90

OVERALL

90

It's no surprise this is arguably the best in its genre.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 59



At least we know which way is up.



Wow, sea turtles explode?!



Sexiest loading screen ever!

AquaNox

>>PC

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-16 >> PUBLISHER: Fishtank >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII-800, 128MB RAM, 3D card

NATHAN THOMPSON gets wet.

AquaNox, as you have probably guessed by now, is an underwater action game that takes place in the distant cyberpunk future. Rather than conquering space, humankind has been forced underwater, where no one can hear you squelch.

Like any good cyberpunk fare the sub-oceanic cities are populated by a cross cultural mob of semi-cybernetic wierdos hell bent on intoxication. You are a privateer looking to make money as a sub for hire. This is the sequel to Archimedean Dynasty, but the similarity ends there immediately.

BLOWING STUFF UP

Like any good privateer game you need to get money to boost up your ship and weapons arsenal. To do this you need to find leads to find work. Unfortunately, unlike any good privateer game, the missions are preset and you can't just go your own way. You have to get through the dialogue to get to the mission.

Successful missions result in cash payments and despite running on rails the missions begin with a fair

amount of variety. The process of cashing up and improving your ship is really the main hook of the game. The conversations also have some pretty funny moments — enough to keep you off the skip button. Once you have found your next mission you head out to the dock and on into the deep ocean.

The game engine is fast and smooth with excellent controls. Using the keyboard and mouse you will be comfortable within a few minutes. A classic FPS setup works better than a joystick, much better in fact. This is largely due to the way you fight. In combat you will end up strafing ninety percent of the time. No complex manoeuvres are needed.

You have to lead your fire or get really close to hit moving targets, especially when using torpedos. Strangely, being underwater doesn't appear to dampen the enormous fireballs when ships explode.

This brings us to the best feature of the game, the visuals. Abandoning the reality of ocean

depths, which are basically endless dark, AquaNox features some of the best lighting effects around.

GOD IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

Beams streak down from the sun above and patterned light moves across the ocean floor and submarine surfaces. Ships are highly detailed and carry spotlights that shine out through the water. Trails of vapour-like bubbles follow projectiles (useful for lining targets up), even from the gattling gun.

The price of this is that you will need a pretty beefy machine to play the game. If you've been shirking a GeForce then this probably won't run on your machine.

Unlike Archimedean Dynasty, AquaNox trades simplicity for detail. There are no complicated controls to learn, no real need to play

tactically, no wingman commands and no mission branches to follow. This means you get the hang of it fast, but at the expense of a longer term, more in-depth game. It's fast and furious and much more like a FPS than a privateer game in the end. <<<

!!! If you have a GeForce 3 card, then you're in for a treat. This game was designed for it!



PLUS: Things that make you go Boom. A visual bonanza.

MINUS: Samey gameplay and limited mission variety

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

92 80 75

OVERALL

80

One of the better aquatic action games.



Star Trek Armada II

>>PC

CATEGORY: RTS >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 450, 64 MB RAM

FRANK DRY dons the red ensign shirt...

Following the surprising success of the first Star Trek: Armada, Activision have brought us a sequel. Astute shoppers will have noted that in an industry where slippage is endemic, STA2 managed to squeeze into stores just before Christmas. More astute shoppers will note that Activision sacked the programming team behind the original game, and were forced to start from scratch with the sequel. Still, when an entrenched franchise is attached to an established genre, it's hard to go wrong.

WE COME IN PEACE...

A salvo of detrimental factors suggest that this game could have stood to benefit from about another six



months of beta testing. The AI, for instance, is full of holes. The standard computer RTS tactics of sending over cheap units to nibble at your defenses is actually quite effective here, as your ships like nothing better than to stray from their assigned posts. Grouping, numbering, and tightly controlling your fleets becomes an absolute priority, lest your mobile assets be lured into enemy territory. Even when stationary, ships tend to twitch and spin of their own accord.

Then there's the muddy graphics. Your vessels offer only a pastel frontage at best, and this effect is worsened if the race you're controlling doesn't believe in washing and waxing. In open space this makes spotting and controlling ships a chore; when your base structures obscure the view you have to select the entire screen to be sure to catch them.

Sound is another sticking point. While the no-name voice actors get a fair bit of dialogue, the much-touted Patrick Stewart seems to have been limited to half a dozen sound

bytes. They should have gone with Michael Dorn; at least you can count on him to go the distance.

...SHOOT TO KILL

Despite the widespread usage of Trek names, properties and graphic design, Star Trek Armada doesn't look particularly futuristic. The graphical flaws can't be ironed out at higher resolutions, as all the ship models and textures seem to be locked in to a pre-alpha aesthetic. Combine this with the shoddy AI, and the tired-and-true RTS formula, and you have a game that while

bigger and broader than the original, comes off second best.

Trek fans need not give up hope, though, as Star Trek: Bridge Commander may already be out by the time this magazine is in newsagents. Failing that, there is the under-rated Conquest: Frontier Wars, and I believe Reach For The Stars is clogging up some bargain bins too. In short, you can do a lot better than Star Trek Armada 2. In fact, it'd be hard to do worse. <<

!!! The 10th Trek film, Nemesis, is already in production. We want Picard!



PLUS: Cool warp effects, play as Species 8472.

MINUS: Textures, sounds, AI, lack of fun.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

65 70 65

OVERALL

69

Trek fans: prepare to test your loyalty.

REVIEW

>>HYPER 61



Quiet or you'll wake George Burns.



PC

Gorasul

CATEGORY: RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: JoWood >> **PRICE:** \$89.95 >>
RATING: M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>
REQUIRED: P350, 64 MB RAM >>

Eehold, another top-down fantasy role playing game. Epic (or at least very time consuming) in scope, Gorasul puts you in control of the destiny of a man charged with the powers of a dragon. In order to purge your homeland of the armies of darkness, you must advance in martial and magic skills, and master your draconic powers for the good of all.

This is a gameplay style that has been around since the original Pool of Radiance, but it's refreshing to see it implemented in such a straightforward fashion. From the start both your character and his chosen weapon have their own attributes and disposition, and from there it's a steady path of acquiring magic items, followers, and oodles of experience points.

The implementation is typical of central European productions, insofar as the game engine is custom made, with a glossy yet functional interface. While the palette is quite dark, highlighting and contrast work hand in hand to make gameplay as non-traumatic as possible. There are one or two glitches in the German to English translation, but the fluid game design makes them transparent.

Gorasul is a big game, spanning four discs. On top of the standard playing time, there are six classes and seven weapons to choose from for added replay value. The game even has a sense of humour. If you're tired of waiting for Neverwinter Nights, or Diablo 3, or any other vapourware, and want to play a solid RPG right now, Gorasul is more than equal to the task. -

James Cottee



Why didn't they release Good Twin instead?



PS2

Evil Twin

CATEGORY: Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> **PRICE:** \$99.95 >>
RATING: M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

A little orphan call Cyprien is the star in this moody French platform game. Things kick off with Cyp, all his buddies at the orphanage, and his talking teddy bear being whisked away to a nightmare dimension based on a twisted vision of the iconography of childhood. The result is a vibe somewhere between Soul Reaver and Beetlejuice.

Evil Twin was developed simultaneously for PC and PS2, and the gameplay is exactly the same between the two. You control Cyp in a third/first person view, exploring vast, varied landscapes. Power-ups scattered around the map grant you the power, briefly, to become Super-Cyp, a flaming haired demigod with amazing pyrotechnic destructive power.

This is all well and good, but Evil Twin on the PS2 is plagued with problems. While the PC version was restricted to the design restrictions of the console world, at least the graphics were slick and scalable. On the PS2, textures seem to have been thrown at the polygons in a mad rush, giving the engine the look of a beta build. There is a lot of rainbowing, too, which combined with the poor lip-synch and long loading times does nothing for the suspension of disbelief.

Considering that horror games only work if you can get completely sucked in, this makes the whole exercise redundant. In a world with bold new games like Jak & Daxter, and slick productions like Klonoa 2, there is little room for flawed games like this one. -

James Cottee



Shaun Hawk or Tony Palmer or someone.



PS2

Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder

CATEGORY: Sports >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Activision >> **PRICE:** \$79.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

It must be said — after playing Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding on the Xbox, Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder was going to have to be extremely good. Whilst Amped isn't perfect, it's a brilliant simulation of snowboarding, with true freestyle access to the complete mountainside — a feat which previously hadn't been achieved satisfactorily. Whilst Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder doesn't have the same graphical "wow" factor as Amped, it does offer the gamer a lot of freedom down the mountain, and that's a big plus from the word go.

The course design in Shaun Palmer emphasises how important it is to have room to move, and the ability to line up and chain combo after combo of tricks. In fact, it plays far more like Tony Hawk Skateboarding on snow than any other snowboarding game to date. Which is a good and bad thing. Good, because essentially this style of gameplay and control is tried and true — you can jump right in and starting having fun. Bad, because applying exactly the same design to snowboarding doesn't quite work. When it's all about performing tasks and pulling tricks, unlike Tony Hawk, you can't turn around and try a specific trick again. You have to board all the way to the bottom then start from the very top and so on, until you get whatever it is you're trying to do right, which might be in some difficult to reach location half-way down.

If you're not already sick of Tony Hawk style play, and you're a snowboarding freak, then Shaun Palmer would be worth checking out. Just don't expect anything particularly innovative. -

Frank Dry

VISUALS 85 SOUND 85 GAMEPLAY 90 OVERALL 88

VISUALS 66 SOUND 59 GAMEPLAY 55 OVERALL 55

VISUALS 79 SOUND 74 GAMEPLAY 78 OVERALL 78

ARCADE

>>TIM LEUW



Apart from the wire-frame arcade games of the mid-Eighties like *Battlezone* and *Star Wars*, it wasn't until 1992 that Yu Suzuki and his team at Sega AM2 would create the first flat-shaded polygonal 3D game. *Virtua Racing*, based on Formula One racing, set the new precedent for a more realistic 3rd dimension. After having to use large garden implements to rake in all the cash that arcade users were willing to spend in the newfound third dimension, Suzuki decided to invest his new found wealth on an even bigger rake and use the Sega Model 1 motherboard to create a realistic martial arts fighting game.

THE BRINK OF LOSING

Virtua Fighter was released in 1993 and was an instant success. Instead of the hyper-reality of the 2D games such as *Street Fighter*, VF1 exploited REAL moves from the arts of Kung Fu, Wrestling, Karate, Ninjitsu and other fighting styles. Even though

all the moves were accessed by only 3 buttons and a joystick, you were able to access countless moves, throws and combinations. Another inclusion to the fighting genre was ring outs (ala Sumo wrestling) which altered the way you could play as you could turn a match around by using throws to 'out' your opponent just as you were on the brink of losing.

Before interest in VF1 had waned, Suzuki followed up with the even greater success of *Virtua Fighter 2* in 1994. This game was hugely popular, especially in Japan where whole arcade floors were devoted to the game in its 'V's back to back' sit down cabinet style. VF2 not only introduced 2 more characters to the original 8 (Mantis-style Lion and the Drunken Master Shun-Di), but it also improved the A.I., included textured graphics and had deeper play mechanics overall. The popularity of the game extended to *Virtua Fighter Kids* - a super deformed, big headed version of

VF2 and *Virtua Fighter Animation* for the Sega Game Gear. But the biggest spin off for VF 2 was the 'port' for the Saturn, which resuscitated interest in Sega's fledgling home console.

In 1996 and '97 *Virtua Fighter 3* and VF3 Team Battle were released and reconfirmed its place as Japan's number one arcade fighter.

DOPE

So... What is so different between VF3 and 4? Bleedingly obvious are the graphics, which are very smooth and well rendered indeed - and on par with the *Dead or Alive* series. Two new characters have been added: Lei-Fei, a young Shaolin-style Monk, and Vanessa, a built, kick-ass army chick. The fight locations look fantastic and range from a smallish sumo style ring to a walled Chinese courtyard to a 'big city' rooftop. Gone are the sloped/terraced floors - all arenas are now flat. Another thing missing is the evade button found in VF 3.

Now you just tap the joystick to move out of the way of oncoming attackers. Jumps are also much smaller and realistic.

Recovery time (time after being hit) has been decreased to be more in line with VF2. We are talking milliseconds here, but in games like this, milliseconds can count.

So all in all, VF4 has taken all the good stuff from VF2 & 3 and repackaged it into a highly replayable fighting sim. In fact, the *Virtua Fighter* series is so dope, that it has been recognised by the Smithsonian Institute for its contribution in the field of Art and Entertainment and is on permanent display in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. How's that for credibility?

OVERALL

9/10

COIN-OP

>>HYPER 63

Bubble



Like, if they're sitting next to you, give them a good shove!



Mmm, Frosty Fruit.

Our resident bubble-boy, **JAMES COTTEE**, takes a look at one of the cutest, silliest, and most addictive games ever made.

It's one of the most endearing and enduring game franchises in the world. Characterised by crazy, madcap, and generally non-violent gameplay, its zany take on bubble-based action stands alone as a work of gaming genius. First released in the arcades in 1986, Bubble Bobble and its sequels radiate an inimitable aura of wholesome insanity, of sanitised mayhem. It's as cute as a button, sharp as a tack, and one of the few games from the period that still offers compelling gameplay today.

One or two persons could play, simultaneously controlling the main characters Bub and Bob. These daring young lads have been transformed by evil sorcery into bubble dragons, and charged with the task of freeing their girlfriends from the sinister Hyper Drunk (No, not Eliot, but Barron Von Bonner in the western release). Armed with nothing but bubbles and vacant grins, these two champions of bubble-dom charged ahead into a hilariously mistranslated title screen: "Now it is beginning of a fantastic story!! Let's make a journey to the cave of monsters! Good luck!"

LITTLE DINO-DUDE

The gameplay model was deceptively simple, with your normal platforming characteristics. Controlling Bub (or Bob) you could move left and right, jump, and fire. But your weapon was no mere firearm, as your little dino-dude would shoot... bubbles! There were no restrictions on how many you could shoot, save your rate of fire, but the trick was to catch the roaming bad-guys while they were in your effective range. Once encapsulated, any foe could be destroyed merely by bursting their bubble.

But you had to be quick. If you left the bubble prison alone for too long, the baddie within would escape, and emerge faster and deadlier than before. Each level was timed as well, with the endlessly looping theme music picking up speed with each passing moment. Success was rewarded with a cornucopia of fruity treats. But if you took too long to clear the level, an indestructible ghost monster would hound you for your tardiness.

While the basic mechanics owe a lot to Joust, Bubble Bobble introduced several innovations to the platforming genre. Your bubbles weren't just for shooting, as you could also jump up and down on them. The more you jumped, the higher you flew, and on some levels this trick was essential for getting out of tight spots. Also, the levels looped vertically. If you fell off the bottom of the world, you re-appear at the top, and vice versa. Exploiting this feature could lead to Pac-Man style escapes, or more optimal use of the weapon bonuses, like the punishing flood spell.

With a hundred levels of puzzle-based platform action, Bubble Bobble was a huge hit, even warranting a PC version, an unusual move at the time. Sequels were inevitable, the first and most striking being Rainbow Islands, busting out in 1987. Bub and Bob had returned to human form, and now used rainbow attacks in their struggle to liberate the Rainbow Islands. In addition to smiting foes, these rainbows could uncover secret items, and serve as bridges to ford gaps and climb ever skyward. Destroy the baddies and escape the rising waters, and a treasure chest full of fruit was your reward. Huzzah!

MAGICAL PARASOLS

1990 saw the release of Parasol Stars, another variation on the theme. Bub

Bobble



Big bubbles no troubles, my arse!



Mmm, dagwood dogs.

and Bob, now armed with magical parasols from the grateful Rainbow Islanders, were now clearing static screens more reminiscent of their first adventure. Each could use his umbrella to pick up and throw items or enemies. They also served as a colourful melee weapon for close-quarter crusading. Ten amazing worlds beckoned to be liberated from an evil wizard, but Bub & Bob were up to the challenge.

Bubble Symphony (1994) took the bubble-struggle to the next generation, with four young lads and lasses subjected to the bizarre humiliation of becoming bubble-spitting reptiles. Each had their own strengths and weaknesses, some shooting bubbles faster, some with greater range. Each shot their bubbles in different patterns too, lending multi-player team ups greater tactical variety. The deep gameplay and vastly improved graphics make Bubble Symphony the fan-favourite of the series.

Less impressive was Bubble Memories (1996), a stale re-tread with cheesy photographic backgrounds. Barring conversions, Bub and Bob have appeared along-side other Taito stalwarts like Tiki the Kiwi in the Bust-A-Move puzzle games, Space Invaders DX, and host of other titles, either as playable characters or as Easter Eggs for the fans.

The Bubble Bobble games have been translated for every system



Happy Guy In Gay Land 3.



Oh baby, it's cold outside...

under the sun, including a recent version for Game Boy Color. More significant is Bub and Bob's rise to the apex of the Taito canon, with their unbearably cute visages often adorning all kinds of corporate paraphernalia. When the Tokyo Game Show swings around, or whenever Taito open a new arcade, boofheads in giant Bub and Bob suits are never far behind.

These two cute little dragons are an indelible part of the rich tapestry of gaming culture, and their goofy visages inhabit arcades to this day. When you see Bub or Bob, do not hesitate to part with your coin, as they represent quality gaming of the highest order. <<



Nothing worse than blue balls!



David Beckham Soccer

>> GBA CATEGORY: Soccer >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >>
PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Here at Hyper we have always stressed that games cannot possibly be educational, but we now stand corrected. During the course of our time with David Beckham Soccer, we've learned much that will stand the entire crew in good stead for the rest of our adult lives. This game and its "The David Beckham Story" mode should be compulsory course work for school students

around the world. For instance, did you know that David Beckham's favourite pre-match meal is pasta, chicken and a light tomato sauce? Or that to celebrate a win after a big match he likes to go and relax with his family? And we were certainly in the dark on the revelation that his hair was "Fair-blondé, shaven". Beckham a shaven haven eh?

Fascinating. Unfortunately, this veritable David Beckham encyclopaedia didn't tell us his blood type, which was disappointing... there goes the Japanese market.

The game itself is viewed from behind one of the goals in an almost top-down perspective, with the camera panning along to follow the action. Controls are kept very simple — pass, shoot, tackle. Unfortunately, the action is just a little too cluttered to get much out of the game — with all those men on the field, there's little elegance to be found in the gameplay. This is compounded by the limited passing mechanics — although putting swerve on the ball helps the fun factor. If you can get into the game, there's enough to keep you hooked — you can even play a full season mode in one of eight premier leagues. Just don't expect actual player and team names. David Beckham Soccer is a step in the right direction for handheld soccer games, but the gameplay is just too messy to be rewarding. — Cam Shea



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
71	58	60	67



Phalanx

>> GBA CATEGORY: Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Kemco
PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Id school side-scrolling shoot 'em up action. When it's done well, the resulting warming glowing warming glow will keep you toasty for months. For those of you who don't remember it, Phalanx was a classic shooter on the Super Nintendo, and here we have the GBA remake. Well, it's a semi-sequel really, with a few extra bits here and there to keep the game playable in these fancy-pants days of super consoles.

Phalanx is quite a capable shooter, that's for sure. For one, the game mechanics are better balanced than most old school shooters. You have four layers of shields protecting your ship, so it takes several hits to lose one of your

precious lives. Another smart piece of design is the weapons system. You have an inventory that can hold all four types of weaponry at once, so once you've picked up more than one type, you can swap between them at will. This introduces a good tactical element to the game, as you can choose your firepower relevant to the situation. Best of all, if you die, only the weapon that you were using is lost, leaving you with any weapons in your inventory to use. This means you're less likely to find yourself fighting a boss armed with only a spud gun. All this sounds like the odds are



stacked in your favour, but Phalanx is a typically shooter-tough nut to crack.

The only areas in which Phalanx falls down are: the limited replayability; the reasonably generic levels; and the feeling that the game isn't really optimised to take advantage of the GBA's hardware. It's cool looking in a 16-bit kind of way, but utilising some of the GBA's niftier effects wouldn't have hurt. Hardly inspirational, but fun nonetheless. — Cam Shea



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	80	82	84



Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder



Great work, Tony. I mean... Shaun!

The extreme sports games keep rolling in. Activision, in fact, have applied for their license to print money, and we're told they should be getting it any day now. Unfortunately for them, we're not convinced. As great as Tony Hawk is, it's a little sad to see an entire range of games branded to take advantage of that game's success... especially when many of them are poor imitations. Regardless of whether or not snowboarding games should

CATEGORY: Extreme sports >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision
PRICE: \$79.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

actually make the transition to handhelds at all, the love that Vicarious Visions put into Tony Hawk 2 on GBA just isn't evident here in Natsume's Shaun Palmer portable.

The meat of the game is career mode, which has three main options — Freestyle, Palmer X and Superpipe. Freestyle you all know — race down the slope and attempt to beat five objectives (points, collect the letters, do certain tricks — the usual). This mode is reasonable — the trick system is relatively easy to get a grip on and the courses are surprisingly long. Unfortunately, the objectives aren't all that taxing and there are only four courses. More annoyingly, your vision of the path to come is cripplingly limited and the isometric perspective makes judging height, position and distance very difficult.

The Palmer X mode is a slalom race against three other boarders. Unfortunately it's a little dull, as



tricks don't give you extra points/speed so you're stuck with simply steering your way down the mountain. The other riders tend to cheat too, making this mode very difficult to beat. The Superpipe mode is a long half pipe, and is probably the most rewarding of them all. Plenty of air and lots of tricks. In all, die-hard

snowboarders will probably dig this game, but the rest of us should steer clear. Oh, and the lack of a battery save? Not impressive. — Cam Shea



He's smokin' that superpipe!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	78	71	77

Mech Platoon



The GBA is flexing its muscles in just about every genre these days. We've had skateboarding, FPSs, turn-based strategy, and now it's time for the real-time strategy genre to get the handheld treatment. Meet Mech Platoon — it's a little bit Starcraft and a whole lotta Warcraft. Oh, and a little bit of Dune for good measure (the intro actually says "The Civilisation that controls the most

CATEGORY: RTS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Kemco >>
PRICE: \$89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

resources will control the Universe").

Mech Platoon will ease you into the gameplay with a comprehensive tutorial mode, and then it's up to you. There are three armies to align yourself with: Leon, specialising in long-range attacks; Minos, the heavily armoured melee masters; and Trampler, with their fast moving and low cost infantry. As in every RTS, you must harvest resources in order to build the facilities and units for each mission. In Mech Platoon, the three resources are Material Rock, Energy Sand and Laser Crystal. There are a decent range of buildings to produce, and of course, you can upgrade your



technologies in order to produce units faster, as well as increasing their power.

What makes Mech Platoon really stand out from the pack, however, is its funky customisation feature. You can actually build your own custom battle units by salvaging parts from your defeated foes. Combining parts and building your own custom squads is definitely one of the most

entertaining aspects of the game. Overall, Mech Platoon is a little slower and less action packed than most PC RTSs, but it's still quite an achievement on GBA. — Frank Dry



"Anyone want to stop for coffee?"



That's the milk frother on the left.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	79	83	83



DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home cinema experience. Every issue we review the latest movies as well as the latest in anime. Kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should watch!

Enemy at the Gates

VILLAGE ROADSHOW, MA15+

Set in what's historically recognised as the single bloodiest battle in the Second World War, *Enemy At The Gates* is a microcosmic view of Russia's desperate campaign to keep Stalingrad from falling beneath the Nazi boot heel. Jude Law plays Vassili Zaitsev, a reticent young man and skilled sniper who is deliberately elevated to hero status — his exploits against the German offensive and growing kill-count becoming the source of immense national pride and inspiration.

When the Germans realise how much strength the Russians are drawing from their hero, they dispatch their own expert marksman, played by Ed Harris, to eliminate Zaitsev. The film culminates in a game of cat and mouse between the two, with the balance of power over Stalingrad seemingly hanging on the outcome of their confrontation.

Supporting cast members like Joseph Fiennes put on an unsurprisingly good performance, but others like Rachel Weisz (from *The Mummy*) and Bob Hoskins (who plays, if you'll believe it, Nikita Krushev) really bring the package together. It might also be worth noting that anyone who's been



Ed Harris laments his flagging career.

addicted to playing as a sniper in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* will get a real rush out of this film. It's just pure sniping bliss, especially when watching Law take out five soldiers, using the sounds of nearby explosions to muffle the sound of his own shots

Enemy At The Gates is as epic, gritty and heartbreaking as *Saving Private Ryan*, but without ever degenerating into the usual Spielberg morality. *Enemy At The Gates* is about war, death, honour, revenge, national pride, and nothing more — a breath-taking and triumphant war movie.

The DVD contains a couple of "making-of" featurettes and deleted scenes, which isn't much by any standard. However, in this case, the film itself is cause enough for handing over your \$35.

MOVIE: 9/10 **EXTRA:** 6/10



Neighbours: Uncut.

Memento

BUENA VISTA, MA15+

Guy Pearce plays Leonard, a man who's knocked out cold during a home invasion in which his wife is killed, and as a result of his injuries, he can't form any short-term memories. So in order to track down his wife's killers, he takes polaroids, keeps notes, and tattoos solid facts all over his body. He's helped by a few cast members of *The Matrix* (Carrie-Ann Moss and Ioey Pantoliano), but you never can tell who's side they're on.

Forgetting the plot for a moment (ho ho! - Ed.), *Memento* is something you watch for the art of film making. It adopts many noir touches, and uses a somewhat scatterbrained approach to piecing the whole story together from multiple angles. It's quite cerebral, weaving in parallels and themes in the process, making the story not so much a triumph in itself, but in the way it is told.

MOVIE: 8/10 **EXTRA:** 2/10

Rush Hour 2

NEW LINE CINEMA, M15+



Shanghai Noon was an utter travesty in the East-meets-West comedy stakes, but *Rush Hour* had some hot potential. The sequel once again casts the ever-irritating Chris Tucker with Hong Kong's king of acrobatic martial arts, Jackie Chan, in an all-new adventure about counterfeit cash, money laundering, and African Americans doing a bad job of being like or among Asians. Latino bombshell, Roselyn Sanchez, and Zhang Ziyi of *Crouching Tiger* fame have been

thrown in for some good measure.

There are more hits than misses with the humour, and there's definite added value if you understand Cantonese, especially when watching decent actors like Don Cheadle get most of their pronunciation right. Tucker, on the other hand, is just awful. His ignorance of Chinese popular culture both on and off the screen is a great source of hilarity.

Loads of smug self-congratulatory commentary from the director — which is not really a good thing — but the disc comes with a real pearl of an easter egg. There's two of them, in fact — two *Fellowship of the Rings* trailers hidden in the Scene Select screens.



Still trying to get your comb back?

MOVIE: 7/10 EXTRA: 8/10



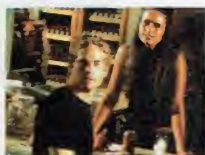
"Okay, cut. Cut. We need a fluffer on set."



They're going so fast, he lost his toupee.

The Fast & The Furious

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, M15+



This is *Gone In 60 Seconds* done right. There's no lovey-dovey bullcrap, no 'out-of-his-ass' Bruckheimer storyline, just pure racing lifestyle, a little crime, and an inconsequential detective story. *The Fast & The Furious* stars Hollywood's A-list of up and coming superstars, including Vin Diesel (*Pitch Black*), Paul Walker (*The Skulls*), Michelle Rodriguez (*Girlfight*), and Jordana Brewster (*The Faculty*).

The Fast & The Furious centres on illegal street racing, the very subject



Face it Paul, you're an Anakin reject.

that inspired hugely popular games like Tokyo Highway Battle, and is the driving force behind the popularity of Gran Turismo. We're not talking about American Mustangs or Corvettes anymore — think Hondas, Toyotas, and every other Japanese rice burner with an extra \$100,000 worth of injectors and parts under the hood.

The story isn't awesome by any standard, and borrows a lot from *Point Break* (undercover cop falls in love with the crowd he's infiltrating), but the sounds and special effects — especially during the 10-second races that are stretched to fill two minutes — are absolutely mind-blowing. The extras in the background are all real as well. Hugely underrated, surprisingly enjoyable.

MOVIE: 6/10 EXTRA: 8/10

Fifth Element

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, PG



Superbit DVDs are a good showcase of the versatility of the DVD format. The movie is trimmed of the usual trailers, audio commentary, featurettes and other perishables, and the resultant dead space is focussed completely on audio and video. Audio and video are in fact sampled at twice the bit rate of normal DVDs, which optimises the sound and picture quality of the film.

In *The Fifth Element*, for instance, the scene where Milla Jovovich dives off the skyscraper into mid-air traffic looks a little sharper and more



Lara Croft's teenage goth years.

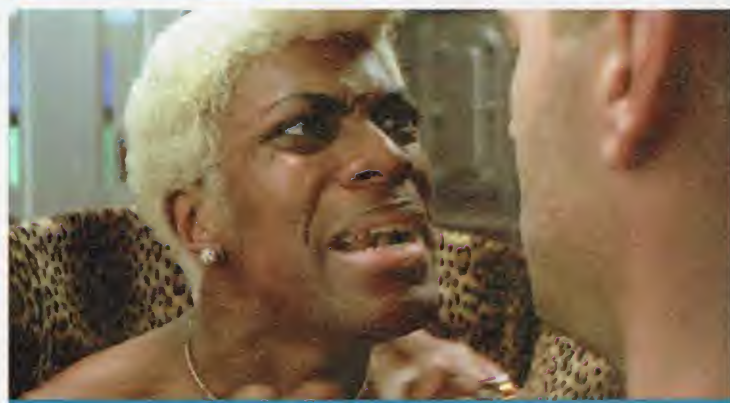
detailed. Of course, you need a pretty decent TV to see the improvements, but it's DVDs like this that show up the differences between a DVD player with real DACs and one of those crap no-name brands that the hacks say are 'just as good'.

There aren't many Superbit DVDs in the market, and so far they're only available on import. Apart from *The Fifth Element* there's also *Crouching Tiger*, *Desperado*, *Air Force One* and *Johnny Mnemonic*. Serious home theatre enthusiasts need only apply here.



David Bowie just won't go away!

MOVIE: 5/10 EXTRA: 2/10



The Jar Jar of this film.

Osmosis Jones

WARNER BROS., M15+

In spite of looking like a kids' flick, this Farrelly Bros animated comedy is a lot funnier than expected. Bill Murray plays a doting dad and all-round slob who doesn't know how to take care of himself. Cue the civilisation of micro-organisms living inside him, managing all the germs, bacteria and neglect that Murray's body suffers through. Inside Murray, it's all animated, and we can see white blood cells like Osmosis Jones (voiced by Chris Rock) fight the forces of evil like a New York cop in a giant city-like environment.

When Bill gets a cold, it hides a terrible virus named Thrax (Laurence Fishburne) who has plans



"You didn't call for Ghostbusters?"

IN CINEMAS

to ultimately kill Murray. It's up to Jones and a cold-and-flu tablet named Drix (David Hyde Pierce) to defeat Thrax before he does any major harm.

The comedy is simple and light-hearted, with extremely creative designs for the body's different locations to look like your average city locale. At the same time there's enough disgusting, gross and obscene humour to keep true Farrelly fans happy.

MOVIE: 7/10



"What am I doing? All I ever wanted was to do theatre..."



"This country's STUFFED! Mind you, best country in the world."

The Late Show CHAMPAGNE EDITION



ROADSHOW, PG

This is seminal Australian comedy right here, dear readers. On a landscape of truly forgettable sketch comedy over the last ten years (Fast Forward/Full Frontal... whatever you want to call it — it sucked), The Late Show was a gem amongst so much dross. Across two seasons (92/93), The Late Show went out live every Saturday night and quickly developed a cult following. It was topical, irreverent, underiably Aussie, a little undergraduate and often very, very sharp. The ensemble cast was superb, with Tony Martin, Rob Sitch and Mick Molloy standing out the most. The live factor really added to the show's appeal, giving the audience a more intimate connection with the cast — especially

when cast members forgot their lines, or pranks were played (such as towards the end of season two when Graham and the Colonel's segment became so bad that the other cast members organised the Grim Reaper to walk back and forth behind them).

This DVD set contains all three "Best Bits Of The Late Show", 50 minutes of extra best bits, and — get this — audio commentary from the entire cast running through it all! That's well over six hours of

commentary, and a great insight into the workings behind the show. Truly champagne sketch comedy, and a must-buy for anyone who watched it first time around. — Cam Shea

MOVIE: 9.5/10 **EXTRA:** 9/10



Mullet

MADMAN, MA 15+

In spite of the title, *Mullet* is not a film lampooning the haircut we all love to hate, but rather a bittersweet ode to small-town Australian life. The title actually refers to a type of fish that abounds in the coastal town where the story is set. Although mullet are plentiful, they are dismissed by the locals as "tasting like crap" and are therefore unwanted. This acts as a metaphor for the return home of Eddie Maloney (played by Ben Mendelsohn), nick-named "Mullet", who left without warning three years previously. Coming back to confront his family and girlfriend, with the misguided hope that he can somehow pick up the pieces of the life he left, Eddie painfully begins to realise that his departure has changed certain things forever. *Mullet* is a gentle and touching exploration of relationships in a small community, and a fabulous



Last time I looked it was a boombox.

follow-up to director David Caesar's brilliant first feature, *Idiot Box*. The extras included on the DVD are equally impressive — an ingenious short film called "Living Room", commentary by the director and producer, a behind-the-scenes documentary, ten deleted scenes, original music from the film introduced by the composer, a music video, six trailers, commentary on the cinematography by the Director of Photography, biographies of the cast and crew, as well as production stills. Highly recommended viewing. — Victoria Flanagan

MOVIE: 8/10 **EXTRA:** 8/10



Powderfinger's Bernard Fanning turns a few snags.

ANIME

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3 x 3 Eyes Collector's Edition

CATEGORY: FANTASY

PRODUCTION COMPANY: KODANSHA/BANDAI VISUAL

This two-disc collector's edition set contains both the 1991 OAV, *Immortals*, and the 1995 OAV, *Legend of the Divine Demon*. For those not in the know, the two stories are in fact chronologically connected, and the four-year gap corresponds with the period in which the two protagonists are separated and in search of each other. Just don't be too surprised by the leap in animation quality between the two OAVs.

TEARJERKER

3x3 Eyes is based on Yuzo Takada's serialised manga, telling the tale of a young girl named Pai, who is the last of a race of powerful three-eyed Sanjiyans. Her human subconscious is largely unaware of the third eye, which takes on a completely separate personality when awakened. Viewers are brought



into the story when a young boy named Yakumo Fujii is transformed into Pai's immortal slave, as indicated by the mark of the Wu in his forehead. His fate is now bound to her's, and he must help her become mortal again.

3x3 Eyes is a very dark adventure, but it is contrasted by a light-hearted romantic link that develops between Pai and Yakumo. It's quite an endearing tale, relatively faithful to the manga; and if you can make sense of the convoluted ending, a bit of a tearjerker.

The DVD comes with both subbed and dubbed options. English dubbing has been completely re-done, just like the new *Akira* DVD. Unfortunately, the video mastering is extremely poor at times, with the colour completely washed out and over-exposed. Still, it's worth owning if you're a fan of the series.

ANIMATION: 8/10 PLOT: 7/10 OVERALL: 7/10



He's such a heart-breaker.



Revolutionary Girl Utena - THE MOVIE

CATEGORY: DRAMA, ACTION

PRODUCTION COMPANY: BE-PAPAS

The movie version of *Revolutionary Girl Utena* is just a slight reinterpretation of the complete original series, except cut and edited to fit within two hours. The first half-hour is a boon to any fan of the series. Characters have been slightly redesigned, art direction will dazzle the eyes with its increased vibrancy and creative set designs — the dialogue and overall direction is more mature and direct than the original. It's more to do with the fact that there's a massive backlog of conflicts and relationships between the characters, so anyone who's familiar with the series will understand the suggestions and deeper meaning of the dialogue.

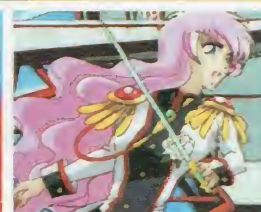
PEAR-SHAPED

For newcomers, therefore, it'll be a little confusing. Utena Tenjou is the newest student at a school where the elite pupils bear the Mark of the Rose. It comes in the form of a ring. This ring gives them the right to duel (with swords) over right of ownership of the Rose Bride, who happens to be a dazzling young lass named Anthy Himemiya. The movie makes few bones about the sexuality of Anthy and the tomboyish Utena. However, when the time comes for Utena to win Anthy and take possession of the immortal prize she offers, the whole story goes pear-shaped. If you're going to get into *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, stick with the OAV. It's much better and less confounding.

ANIMATION: 8/10 PLOT: 6/10 OVERALL: 6/10



I think we should re-watch this scene for educational purposes.



HYPERRIVISION

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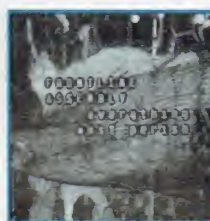
Whether it be on the soundtrack to the latest videogame, getting high rotation on the airwaves or tagged on the credits of the latest blockbuster movie, the latest music releases are everywhere. Want to know what's hot and what's not? Our **Hyper CD reviews** should keep you in the loop.



OUTKAST Big Boi & Dre Present

BMG

Outkast have long been one of the most underrated acts in contemporary hip hop. Since hitting the scene back in 1994 with their Southerplayisticadillacmuzik album, Dre (AKA Andre 3000) and Big Boi have released album after album of innovative, clever and always funky music. Now that they've hit the mainstream in a big way thanks to their hugely popular Stankonia album, and the hits Ms. Jackson and So Fresh, So Clean, the inevitable "best of" album has arrived. For anyone new to the Outkast sound, this disc is a must-buy, highlighting the full range of their infectious sing-song Southern style. The album also has three brand new tracks, that see Big Boi and Dre getting funky on a Parliament/Funkadelic tip. They can do no wrong. - **Cam Shea**



FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY Everything Must Perish

METROPOLIS

If you put Peter Dinklage (remember Pete, whatever happened to Pete?) and Trent Reznor in a room together with a plethora of digital recording equipment and some very strong acid they might come up with something like this. Everything Must Perish is dark and disturbing electronica, but it sort of has that cheesy dance music feel that makes you think that the big happy "I love you baby, please come back" chorus could be just around the corner. All the same, it's not completely unenjoyable.



BLIND DOG The Last Adventures of Captain Dog

METEORCITY

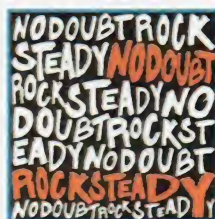
Those damn Scandinavian louts are frigging strange. Blind Dog are probably best described as a nice middle ground between Motorhead, early Megadeth and Guns & Roses, and the combination is classically Swedish — passionate, powerful and unashamedly dated. This is a low-fi record, recorded quickly and without fuss, depending more on straight out aggression than any particular studio finesse. If you're an old school heavy rock fan, Blind Dog might put a curve ball in your collection.



GEORGE Polyserena

SHOCK

With a rabid live following and a string of minor releases, George are already a well respected name in Australian music circles, and with the release of this, their debut full length album, that respect is set to grow. Including the two well received singles "Spawn" and "Bastard Son", this set of songs is thick with a moody tension and dramatic class that belies its often simple structures. The voices of siblings Tyrone and Katie Noonan both carry the listener in unexpected directions, complemented by the laid back orchestration that dominates here. Great, category free music.



NO DOUBT Rocksteady

UNIVERSAL

No Doubt have come a long way since Gwen Stefani announced to the world that she was just a girl, and whether or not the evolution has pleased everyone, there is no denying that it has been quite amazing. Rocksteady shows nothing of the original ska influenced No Doubt, instead delivering a dense, immaculately produced alt-pop outfit more than a little reminiscent of Garbage (a happy Garbage...). With production from the likes of William Orbit, Sly and Robbie, and Prince (his track "Waiting Room" is pretty awesome) this is easy on the ears, if not always completely rocking.



SONIC ANIMATION Reality By Deception

FESTIVAL

They took the Big Day Out by storm, now Adrian (Cartwright) and Rupert (Keiller) are sending their bleeps and beats to take over your stereo with the infinitely enjoyable follow-up to their hit debut, Orchard for the Afterworld. The vibe is seldom lowered as the electro hooks keep on coming, the highlights including E-Ville (with Shihad's Jon Toogood on vocals), plus, the brilliant intro to I'm a D.J., and my favourite, the sugar-coated, Really Supa Doopa. Rating high up for danceability, it's overall charm invariably lies in the unpretentious humour of the lads which creeps it's way naturally onto most tracks here.



WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO:



Eliot - Art of Fighting - "Wires"
Radiohead - "I Might Be Wrong"

Cam - Mondo Grosso - "MG4"
Derrick L. Carter - "About Now"

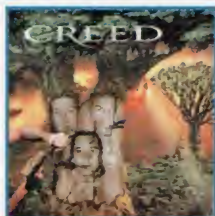
Malcolm - Stereolab - "Sound-Dust"
Drum&BassArena - "The Album"



BURN Cleanse

EQUAL VISION

✂ I'm never quite sure how these things find their way to me, but I'm usually pretty glad they did. Burn play hardcore with a nice nod to Henry Rollins and a big slice of Jello Biafra wedged into the mix. The title track had me thinking of a slow version of the DK's "Triumph of the Swill" with a touch of heavy metal mayhem thrown in for good measure, and the same vibe flows through the whole album. Lyrically, Burn scream revolution, attacking racism, classicism, sexism, and ignorance of all kinds with the sort of verve only hardcore bands seem to be able to muster these days.



CREED Weathered

SONY

✂ It's a tough call on Creed. Really, they're probably a fair enough band. They write solid songs, perform them with passion and a little bit of imagination, and are — relative to most rock stars — humble and down to earth blokes. Even so, there's something not quite right here. Whether it's just because they're ten years too late, or something to do with the fact they are some damn huge in the US, Creed leave a bad taste in the eardrum. Weathered is a well-produced, well-performed post-grunge album, easily the best Creed have done, but it's about as exciting as Playboy to a blind man.



FU MANCHU California Crossing

FESTIVAL

✂ Ah, that fat guitar... Rock & roll may have undergone many a face-lift in its lifetime, but there are a handful of faithfuls who carry the original visage in their heart and leak it out to us when we take the time to listen. Fu Manchu have delivered another album of straight up good time stoner rock, as heavy as a Queensland bud and as thick as the smoke that curls from it. From the moment opener "Separate Kingdom" lays its low grinding boot into the side of your head, all you can do is nod along, thinking of better days and better places where pleasure is simple and rock is real.



SOLA ROSA Solarized

FESTIVAL

✂ New Zealander Andrew Spraggon was singer/guitarist in Auckland rock band Cicada before discovering the joys of knob twiddling in 1998 to self-finance two EP's of electronica as Sola Rosa. Festival records signed him up and he went to work in his home studio to produce Solarized, his full-length debut. Getting off to a slow beginning with some repetitious laid-back grooves, Spraggon takes Solarized up to full swing mode in the lounge stylings of King of Hush, before the steady, deep hypnotic groove of Me in your Shadow displays his full talents in combining live instruments with samples.



KITTIE Oracle

SONY

✂ When Canadian three piece Kittie released their debut album Spit, it proved something — not only can girls play great metal, but there's no reason a chick vocalist can't bellow a foul throated scream the equal of any man. Oracle sees Kittie take it to the next level, and Morgan Lander tears shreds from eardrums with some incredible singing, blending abrasive moments that would do Tom Araya from Slayer proud with genuine, smooth female singing. Musicianship is top notch too, making Oracle an album worth every ounce of estragon it took to make.



LASH The Beautiful and the Damned

FESTIVAL

✂ Taken with a grain of salt, Lash really aren't as bad as they might seem. I initially approached this album expecting something akin to horse riding with haemorrhoids, but once I relaxed into the saddle and excepted a bit of a bubble gum with the bile, Lash were not bad fun. Don't go looking for phenomenal playing or profound lyricism, but songs like first single "Take Me Away", "Caged My Soul" and closer "Only To Heal" are pretty fair for a no-brainer listening mood. There's enough going on here to justify a few silly hats and some slightly cliched riffs.

JUNK

JAMES
COTTEE



✂ Hubris. It's a fancy-pants word for being full of yourself. It's the inspiration that grants bold men the power to do things that should not be done. It's self-confidence in the extreme, the ego gone mad. When confined to a single person's head, its effects can be controlled. But when it grips the powerful, those with influence over the lives of millions, such hubris becomes a blight upon the land.

I refer of course to game designers. Many a cyber-celebrity, buoyed by the success of their early works, win the trust of huge software houses. Once in absolute control of a project, these prima donnas feel they can expedite their most indulgent theories in the name of individuality. The results are seldom pretty. Daikatana, anyone?

As the paying public, it's our fault for building up their egos. Other art forms have long borne the big heads of their greatest stars, and suffered bloated, irrelevant content as a result. The artist currently known as Prince, springs to mind, but he's not alone. If only. One fan letter too many, and even the most respected film director can flip out and start giving cameo roles to N*SYNC.

This madness has got to stop. There are enough factors in this world already that prevent us getting the media we deserve. Higher game budgets means fewer and fewer games, and for every title in which a programmer puts his own obscure interests ahead of the consumer, thousands wonder if there is an alternative to the big studio system. Not just for games, but for music and movies too.

Well, there is. And you don't even have to steal. Many artists, knowing they'll never get an even break, put their works up for free on the web. It's not the answer to every problem, but sometimes you need to know that you're not directly stoking the flaming ego of a self-styled genius.



Daikatana:
fight some frogs

Junk mail (but no junk mail) to
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- 1 x SGS PS2 game - \$85
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FORUM

✉ **HYPER FORUM:** 78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

Q. IS ONLINE GAMING THE WAY OF THE FUTURE?

We've all got big hopes for the future of multiplayer interactivity and the onset of online console gaming, but will it kill the single-player experience? Is online gaming the way of the gaming future at the expense of other forms of play? Let's see what you had to say...

R U
L337?



HYPER FORUM

Everyone has a different opinion and the Hyper Forum is where you can get your thoughts out of your head and onto the page for all to see. Don't forget that we have a new topic every issue! The next topic of discussion...

“Which video-game character do you most relate to, and why?”

Responses will be printed in Hyper 103.

E-mail: FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

HERE'S HOPING

Well, I definitely think that it is, but it has a long way to go. The technology to transfer data faster to other machines is a must, as well as incorporating Online play as a standard feature. What I mean by that is a Console where almost any game that is two players or more can be played with someone, anywhere else in the world. That, I believe, should be the next step in online gaming. I am dying to find my match in a game of Tetris Attack (Pokémon Puzzle League). I want to share the levels I've created on Perfect Dark around the world and boast that my character has walked the same distance from Melbourne to Sydney and back. And I want to play a beat 'em up game with 8 players at once for a REAL all in brawl.

Basically, what I want is to play against/with gamers who are as die hard dedicated to their games as I am. My biggest hope for the GameCube, Xbox and PS2 is to incorporate a feature like this into all their games. It's unlikely, but not all together impossible. Here's hoping.

Thomas Woodrow
Thomasuwoo@yahoo.com

VR WARS

Is online gaming the way of the future? Well, the way I see it, the only answer to this question is a definite yes. With broadband and cable connection markets becoming more competitive, (The ACCC recently slapped Telstra with a 12 million dollar fine for anti-competitive behaviour) more and more people will have the luxury of high-speed data transfer. This of course means that there will be a greater number of games out there

that can be made more complex and interactive without having to worry about catering for modem users (such as myself). Games have already become less constricting in a gameplay sense, and the 'galaxy' genre is starting to emerge as one of the most popular. Just look around at the amount of people playing the MMORPGs and the hype surrounding upcoming games like Star Wars Galaxies and World of Warcraft and you'll see what I mean. Of course there will always be offline gaming,



Final Fantasy XI has crazy fantasy giraffes! Yeah!



Phantasy Star Online is coming to all the consoles!



World of Warcraft could bring out the orc in you.

the buying power of the casual gamer will make sure that happens, but even that can and will be integrated into online gaming as well.

The speed that advances in data transfer speed and hardware are happening, I wouldn't be surprised if all this and more (like online VR wars) were a common thing in the next 2-3 years.

See you all in the digital,
Phillip English
Phillip_english@yahoo.com.au

OFFLINE GAMING

Online gaming is and is not the way of the future. It depends at how you look at it. On one hand, we have the millions of people on the PC that already do online gaming - fragging each other all over the world with their fancy DSL and cable modems and laughing at people with a humble 56k. But on the other hand, you find console gamers used to the simplicity of a split-screen four-player deathmatch and all by their lonesome playing in grand one-player adventures.

For PC gamers the future is now but it will not be as easy for game companies to coax console gamers. For starters, the monthly bills, the low speeds and high ping rates will greatly annoy gamers no matter how great the game is, since most people buy game consoles because of their overall affordability. All but a few will not shell out for high speed connections.

Online gaming will be a part of the future of gaming but until prices come down and speed goes up, offline gaming will be the future of video games for a long time to come.

Nworldnmc
nworldnmc@yahoo.com.au

PERVERTED 50-YEAR OLDS

Is online gaming the way of the future? Bloody hell it is. The reason for this is that society is becoming more and more anti-social. With online internet you don't even need to go out of your house if you don't want to. I bet you your imported GameCube that in twenty years time all the people in the world would have forgotten what the SUN is. We all know having a few mates around to have a bang at your PlayStation or N64 it's just so much better than sitting next to a computer and talking to people you don't even know, and who nine times in ten are just a perverted 50 year-old who gets off talking to teenagers on the net. Online gaming is in my opinion going to be, to my disappointment, the way of the future.

That's my two cents,
James T
j1999@ausi.com

THAT WARM FEELING

We could say 'yes' and we could say 'no'. Online gaming sounds cool and futuristic, and anyone that has access to the internet and a bit of



Star Wars: Galaxies - Elliot will quit his job!

money can play killer games (and 'maybe' with friends on the other side of the world). People want to be up-to-date with the latest technology and style, in other words, "they want to feel cool and be part of the crowd", so we can be sure that a lot of people (hundreds) will be gaming online in the future. But, before you start thinking that online gaming 'is' the way of the future, human psychology (ahem) comes in. Aren't you proud of your game collection? Aren't you proud of actually 'owning' a particular game? Actually having the original hard-copy back home? Games on the net are accessible to everyone, and nobody can actually say they own the game. Discs and cartridges on the other hand make a gamer/owner feel... feel... that warm feeling you feel after purchasing a really good game, and say "Hey, I have this game". So a lot of people (thousands) will be (or 'are' "logically!") buying games and consoles. Altogether, we cannot say anything about online gaming. Only the future will tell.

Anthony Palmer
Apalmer@vanuatu.com.vu

A WHOLE NEW EDGE

Yes, most definitely. Why? Because online gaming adds a whole new edge to gaming. You can chat to someone instead of talking to repetitive talking NPCs.

A few nice examples:
www.graal2001.com,
www.ragnarokonline.com,
www.bolehggame.com (it's a nice game but most of the players are Indonesians, like me)

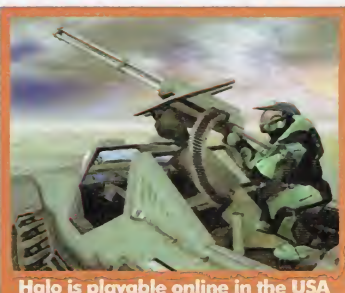
So yes, Online gaming is a way of the future!

Lord K&ne
Lordkanegraal@hotmail.com

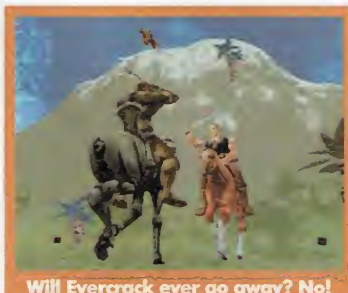
INSULT/PRAISE

For me, online gaming isn't anything big or advanced as ultimately you're just playing a one-player game against opponents with a personality. Although most people will disagree, it only feels like multiplayer if you can see and insult/praise your opponent/ally.

From Anonyman
haybotofpower@hotmail.com



Halo is playable online in the USA



Will Evercrack ever go away? No!

MAIL



HYPER LETTERS:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

UNEXPLAINABLY APPEALING

Dear Hyper,

One day I went to my newsagent for the next issue of my beloved *** magazine, when I made a shocking discovery. They had closed their doors and stopped making the magazine! As devastated as I was, I got over it fast and desperately searched for a new monthly magazine to collect. Fortunately for you guys, your cover was the most attractive, so I grabbed it and took it home with me. To my amazement it was a multi-platform mag which in the past I rejected, but something about the mag made me keep coming back for more. I have been reading your mag for over a year now and all I can say is I want more! I really don't know how you guys did it, but your magazine is one of a handful of mags out there that is "readable". Its layout and unique color scheme is unexplainably appealing, and being a multi-platform mag, your reviews are honest and you never take sides. This allows people to get the real story on those mega hyped up

games and decide on the best buy. I cannot describe how confusingly good your mag is.

Luke Orrin
imSTILLnottellingyoumy-
email@hotmail.com

Dear Luke,
If it weren't for letters like yours,
it'd be hard to get up in the
morning. Cheers!

WE LOVE YOU TOO

I love you hyper, I hope you love me too. Hyper is the only one for me. I been bottling this letter up inside for 10 years, I can't take it no more, I can't drink whiskey like I use'ta could. Here's some things you probably would be better off not knowing, but maybe not:

1. If the earth's entire human population was blended/pulped we would all fit into a cube 710metres x 710metres x 710 metres in size. This calculation is based on 6 billion human population, at an average mass of 60kg/human (a fair estimate when you average kids/women/fat westerners/malnourished developing

nation inhabitants), and a human having a density of 1000kg/m³ (the density of pure water). Hence the GameCUBE is the essence of life.

2. I reckon they should make a first person shooter like Quake that uses a gun like Time Crisis — that would be dreamy. I understand we would probably require either a third arm or a revolutionary controller to go with the gun, but I am ready for it. Somebody please just make it happen. Hyper press those buttons.

3. I wish Hyper could include with their reviews details on the framerates for games, because I don't play anything that don't run at 50/60 fps (well I'll go to 35 fps if I have to, but I don't like it).

4. Die Pirates and Scum.

5. I heard from a close source that Brad Pitt left Gwyneth for Jennifer because Gwyneth didn't like Brad playing computer games and Jennifer doesn't even know what a computer is.

If you could answer these questions it would be greatly appreciated.

Ronny
Thenobleman@hotmail.com

Dear Ronny,
Er... what questions??

IT DOESN'T ADD UP!

Hey Fellas,
I'm from New Zealand and have been getting your mag for a few years now and there is one question that's been on my mind all that time. That is, how do you get the overall score for the games you review? See over here we thought that you'd add up the three totals (Visuals, Sound and Gameplay) and then divide it by 3 to get the average, which would be the overall score. But I've done the math and it doesn't always add up! So how do you guys work it out?

Thanks,
Piper
Harley_Piper@hotmail.com

Dear Piper,
The overall score is not an average.
The reviewer scores the game overall
based on how they feel it stands up
against other games in the genre

and/or on the same gaming platform. Both editors at Hyper discuss the overall score of every game in the issue and sometimes debate it with the reviewer if we feel a game has not been scored objectively.

IDEA FOR NINTENDO

Dear Hyper,

Hyper: Read it. Love it.

I have an idea for Nintendo, which will position them beyond "kiddie". I work in a corporate environment and use a Palm Vx to keep track of meetings and contacts. It is expensive, slow and four shades of grey with a whacked button configuration making the limited game play experience on the nose. I stupidly bought my Vx as an upgrade to my Newton 2100 but that is a different story. Anyway, what I would love is for my GBA to be my PDA.

Nintendo should make a PDA in a cartridge that syncs to Outlook/Notes with a secondary interface through the GBA using the d-pad. Imagine GBA gaming cred heralding your next appointment in the form of Mario's "Letsa go". Less expensive, more fun and heaps of willing purchasers. Nintendo could even release a special "executive edition" cased in brushed aluminium and get into peripherals like a keyboard... Okay, okay I am getting away from myself but it would be the coolest!

Tom
Tomhurst@bigpond.com

Dear Tom,
the position of President at
Nintendo of America was recently
vacated. If only you'd gone for it!

QUIETLY INSANE

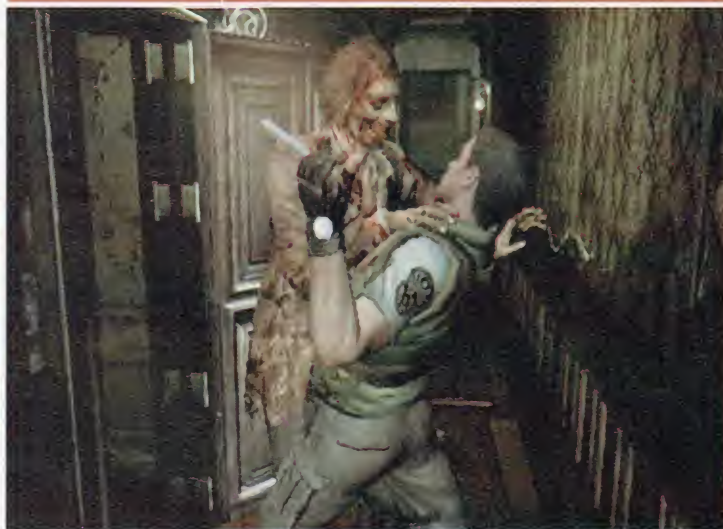
Dear Hyper,

let me tell you what a grown man has to do to upgrade into the latest gaming age. First off he has to let his wife nag him for about two months to get up off his gaming arse, and go see the little man who gives you money with lots of interest. Then, after you are \$25000.00 in the red, thanks to this little man, you then have to spend the next three months building an

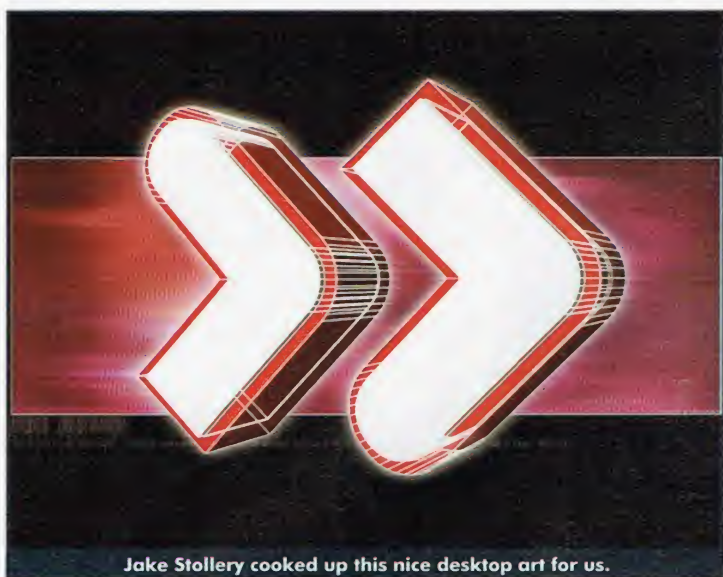
CAPTION THIS!

PART 26 WINNER

Our winning caption comes from **Stormbringer** (bchurche@bigpond.net.au). And for those of you who haven't seen The Graduate, you're missing out...



"Mrs. Robinson, you're trying to seduce me... aren't you?"



Jake Stollery cooked up this nice desktop art for us.

extension on the side of your house, listen to your lovely (have to say that) wife say a hundred times "THAT ISN'T RIGHT", convert your old kids room into a study, and go quietly insane at the same time. PEOPLE this is not good, but, ahhhhhhhhh! This is when you go to the big guys and say "I'll have that big hunk of Pentium 4 over there to go thanks". (Big upgrade from the GBC hey!) Then you can go back to your own world of blood shot eyes, and your kids jumping on your head while ya try and blow some shit away with MAX PAYNE!

Thanks guys

Michael
Michaelsemianiw-
@optusnet.com.au

Dear Michael,

Your kids must be playing too much Mario if they're always jumping on your head.

NO-TENDO

Greetings Hyper dudes,

Instead of starting my letter as everyone else usually does ("Great mag guys!"), I'm going to give you far more praise. Do you realise that this magazine is single-handedly keeping the Australian videogame industry alive? It's true!

I spend many hours a day surfing the net with my Telstra cable (which I'd just like to take this opportunity to say SUX!) and visiting many great videogame sites (Hyper included). And I usually like to hit the message boards and discuss the world of videogames and the new generation of consoles (mostly the GameCube). And every so often (and I mean

often), there is a topic with a heading like "When is the GC coming out in Australia?" or "Why does Nintendo hate Australia?"

Yes, it is generally Nintendo that I'm talking about. Microsoft have already begun a huge advertising campaign for their Xbox (*shudder*) and even given a release date. But Nintendo will not give us a scrap of information about the GameCube. Have you guys been to the official Australian Nintendo site lately? It's PATHETIC! Do you know what's there? Information about GBA warranties and a link to the American site. That's disgraceful! So I just want to say thank you Hyper for keeping us alive.

Also, I have a question. Being the hard working game reviewers that you are (right?), one would assume that you would have very little, if not, no time to actually play games for fun. Do you ever get to sit down and play a game right through to the end? I mean, you have what - 10 to 15 reviews a month? That would leave hardly any time to actually play your own choice of games. I guess there is a down side to playing games all day.

Jason,
Draco_86@hotmail.com

Dear Jason,
I will admit that I much preferred it when I could concentrate on enjoying one single game for weeks on end, rather than chopping and changing all the time. But then again, if you're games addicts like us, being swamped in new games every week is also what keeps us alive. That and mainlining coffee.

THE ELUSIVE R18+ RATING

Dear Hyper,

The pull of Grand Theft Auto 3 from shelves this week has got me pondering an important issue with gaming today. Often the question is asked, "Are video games too violent?" But that's not really the question that should be considered.

The real question should be, "Are video games properly classified and their sale policed." What is the office's opinion on the rating system of games? And are you guys for or against the elusive R18+ games rating? I personally am for it.

I'm sure you are no doubt receiving truckloads of complaints on this topic, as GTA3 was popular with everyone. Many may have missed out (hehehe got my copy), and are out for blood.

But my main reason for support of R18+ is that developers can stop tip-toeing around what they can and cant do, can and cant say etc. We can get more quality titles like GTA3, developers can go all out and say this is what we are going to do and we'll chuck it in the R18+ classification.

We all know that games don't influence the average person's behaviour, Star Trek effects a hell of a lot more adults, and if this was true Eliot, Jackson and Kevin would be out there in Redfern jacking cars as they all rated the game highly. However, knee-jerk reactions will never cease, therefore with a R18+ the pulling of titles from shelves would be reduced.

Anyhow dem be mah thoughts,

Kaji

Kaji@today.com.au

Dear Kaji,

The Hyper crew are very much in favour of an R18+ category for videogames. It's ridiculous what we can access on the internet these days, yet a cartoon-style game that allows you to very comically commit unrealistic crimes gets banned regardless of the fact that it's one of the finest pieces of interactive entertainment to be designed in years.

You've won an exclusive 360 Modena Racing Wheel for PC! A replica of the wheel in a Ferrari 360 Modena.

Don't forget to include your contact details in your letter.

THRUSTMASTER®

<http://au.thrustmaster.com>
Wheel valued at \$99.95.



AND MORE....

Wham bam thank you OFLC. You can thank them for the recent banning of quite possibly the best game ever created, Grand Theft Auto 3. Apparently the game is unsuitable for minors, ok, I'll keep that in mind for when I have a child, but right now, I am an extremely pissed off 23 year-old who wants GTA3.

"Grand Theft Auto 3 players embark on a criminal career which includes road rage, drug trafficking and murder" — says the Daily Telegraph. Gee, that sounds bad, I suppose they just want everyone to shut their eyes and play Spyro the dragon all day, and forget that there is things like road rage, drug trafficking and murder in the world.

The game sold out in most stores across Australia, and across the world, it's one of the highest games in demand this Christmas, and they banned it, because "It is unsuitable

for a minor to play", well, I have a solution to this, bring in the 'R' rating, then all will be well.

Playing the bad guy is a rare thing in games, and gamers love it. People always love the bad guy, Darth Vader, Kieser Sosay, they are all cool, we don't know why, but the majority of gamers love destruction, violence and rampage, I don't want to play a game of happy happy joy joy, prancing around as some cutesie character in a mystical world of bright seizure-inducing colours, just because it's suitable for minors to play.

There are a hell of a lot of mature gamers out there, their voices need to be heard, not this constant "wont someone please think of the children" bull crap. I hope you can do something about this Hyper, being a prominent figure in Australia's gaming industry, I feel you could help raise awareness of the other generation of gamers, not

MAIL

just the Harry Potter/Pokémon playing minors. Oh, someone please protect them from the evilness of video games, never mind what's happening on the television set every night, or what their parents get up to in their bedrooms when they're tucked in their bedy-byes.

It is a sad day for gaming if GTA3 is not allowed for distribution in Australia.

Calum Morrison
Morrison1000@hotmail.com

Dear Calum,
Running stories in Hyper pushing for an R category is unfortunately simply preaching to the converted. The only way we can make a change, is to continually pressure the OFLC by writing letters and stating why you as an adult should have access to these kinds of games. You can visit the OFLC website at www.oflc.gov.au.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING...

Why is the Hyper letters email address freakscene@...?

Ian Choi
Bukchoy73@hotmail.com

Dear Ian,
Because if you want freaks, this is where you'll find 'em.

LOADING...

Dear Mr Hyper,

I've been harbouring this immense anger against game loading times. If you have waited for your game to load and see this sad bar trying to fill itself up, chances are you will be pulling your hair out the 876th time it loads, because that jerky loading thing won't not shudder around. My wonderful concept is that game developers should put some effort to make that loading bar load as smooth as a baby's bum. That way you can actually time your in-between rests when it loads, instead of making a wild gamble of either making a coffee or going to the loo.

Oh yeah 2 more Qs -

1. Why do you publish twisted game fantasies from lunatic people? Isn't there any thing else worthwhile to print at Hyper H.Q? First they were hilarious, 2nd time it gave me a few laughs and now they are just f#%ing boring.

2. Don't you get fed up answering



Paul Goninan from Wellington, NSW did this great illo.

stupid, worthless, insignificant questions like "Which is better GameCube or Xbox?" or "Which game is better?" I see them in the letter section EVERY issue.

See you guys next issue & thanks for making the most wicked games mag ever!

Keating Vuong
Smallduckkeys_quack@hotmail.com

Dear Keating,

1. Because sometimes they're more interesting than the "which console is better?" letters.
2. See above.

STUFF

What doin',

I'd like to start off by saying that I have just finished BG: Dark Alliance on the PS2 and it is really good. Whatcha think of the ending? Reckon they will make a sequel? I hope so especially if they allow you to import your characters across.

Anyway, on with the questions.

1. Do you know if there are any plans for a Thief game on the PS2?
2. What about any Freespace games?
3. Also when will the net adapter be out for the PS2 in Australia? Will it come with the hard drive?
4. I heard a rumour about Icewind Dale 2. Is this true? Cause I definitely hope so.

Well that's all I wanted to ask Cheers,

Jason Ratajczek
Jasra_@hotmail.com

Dear Jason,
There is no doubt that they are working on a sequel. It wasn't

exactly an ambiguous ending.

1. We truly hope so. Deus Ex will be on PS2 very soon which is a good start....

2. Not that we're aware of.

3. Sony have not announced release dates yet.

4. Yes, Icewind Dale 2 is in development.

98 REASONS WHY...

Dear Hyper Dudes,

While I was flicking through my copy of Hyper issue 100, reading the hilarious one hundred reasons why gaming rocks, I came across pages 70 and 71 and after scanning the two pages for a good minute, to my horror and amazement I could not find reasons 54 and 55 of why gaming rocks!!! What's up wi' dat??? Is it just my copy that lacks these undoubtable fit-inducing, laugh-o-rama comedy masterpieces?! HELP ME. I must collect them all... er... all one hundred reasons why gaming rocks that is. Another abnormality in issue 100 is the unusual way in which the Halo soldier is checking out Chun-li and pumping his gun... ummm maybe it's just me. Anyway let me just say that I am now the proud owner of a Nokia 5510!!! And I LOVE IT, Hyper hardware section, you never steer me wrong, but you have been sadly missing for several issues. Keep up the good work!!

Mr. K (aka Sticky-Goo fan 327)
dj_professor_k@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. K,
it was a printing error. Here they are: 54. "Hadoken!", 55. You get to beat up the Rock. Repeatedly. And lots of Hardware next issue!

Harvey Norman

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HH4

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

**TOP
10**

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Gran Turismo 3 | Racing |
| 2 | ◆ | Cricket 2002 | Sports |
| 3 | ◆ | World Rally Championship | Racing |
| 4 | ▲ | Devil May Cry | Action |
| 5 | ▲ | Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance | RPG |
| 6 | ▼ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 | Sports |
| 7 | ▼ | WWF Smackdown! | Sports |
| 8 | ▼ | Jak & Daxter Precursor Legacy | Adventure |
| 9 | ▼ | James Bond Agent Under Fire | Action |
| 10 | ◆ | Crash Bandicoot 3: Wrath of Cortex | Adventure |

**TOP
10**

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 2 | ▲ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 3 | ▼ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 | Sports |
| 4 | ▲ | Syphon Filter 3 | Adventure |
| 5 | ▼ | Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? | Family |
| 6 | ◆ | FIFA 2002 | Sports |
| 7 | ◆ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |
| 8 | ◆ | Digimon | RPG |
| 9 | ★ | Wacky Races Collection | Compilation |
| 10 | ▼ | Spiderman Enter Electro | Adventure |

**TOP
10**

Game Boy Games Over \$40

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 2 | ◆ | Pokemon Crystal | RPG |
| 3 | ◆ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 4 | ◆ | Pokemon Gold | RPG |
| 5 | ▲ | Pokemon Silver | RPG |
| 6 | ▼ | Zelda: Oracle Of Ages | RPG |
| 7 | ◆ | Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons | RPG |
| 8 | ▲ | Donkey Kong Country | Adventure |
| 9 | ▼ | Pokemon Yellow | RPG |
| 10 | ★ | Pokemon Blue | RPG |

**TOP
10**

N64 Games Over \$40

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ▲ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |
| 2 | ▼ | Conker's Bad Fur Day | Adventure |
| 3 | ▲ | Banjo Tooie | Adventure |
| 4 | ▼ | Perfect Dark | Action |
| 5 | ▼ | Zelda: Majora's Mask | RPG |
| 6 | ▼ | Donkey Kong 64 | Adventure |
| 7 | ★ | Goldeneye 007 | Action |
| 8 | ▲ | Pokemon Stadium | Action |
| 9 | ◆ | Star Wars Battle For Naboo | Action |
| 10 | ▼ | Pokemon Snap | Family |

**TOP
10**

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 2 | ◆ | The Sims Hot Date | Strategy |
| 3 | ▲ | Empire Earth | Strategy |
| 4 | ▼ | The Sims | Strategy |
| 5 | ◆ | Return To Castle Wolfenstein | Action |
| 6 | ◆ | The Sims Collectors Edition | Strategy |
| 7 | ◆ | Civilization 3 | Strategy |
| 8 | ★ | The Sims House Party | Strategy |
| 9 | ★ | Diablo 2: Lord Of Destruction | RPG |
| 10 | ▼ | Ghost Recon | Strategy |

**TOP
10**

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Mario Kart Super Circuit | Racing |
| 2 | ◆ | Super Mario Advance | Adventure |
| 3 | ▲ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 4 | ▼ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 5 | ▼ | Golden Sun | RPG |
| 6 | ▲ | Spyro Season Of Ice | Adventure |
| 7 | ▼ | Wario Land 4 | Action |
| 8 | ◆ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |
| 9 | ◆ | Advance Wars | Strategy |
| 10 | ★ | Breath Of Fire | RPG |

**TOP
10**

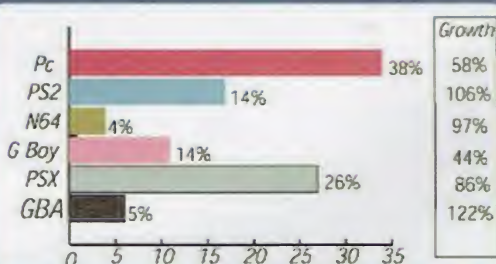
All Full Priced Games

W/E 6 Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | ▲ | Gran Turismo 3 | PlayStation 2 |
| 2 | ▼ | Harry Potter | PlayStation |
| 3 | ▲ | Monsters Inc | PlayStation |
| 4 | ▲ | Cricket 2002 | PlayStation 2 |
| 5 | ▼ | Harry Potter | Game Boy |
| 6 | ▲ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 | PlayStation |
| 7 | ▼ | Pokemon Crystal | Game Boy |
| 8 | ▼ | Harry Potter | PC/MAC |
| 9 | ★ | The Sims Hot Date | PC/MAC |
| 10 | ◆ | World Rally Championship | PlayStation 2 |

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

Dec Vs Nov 2001
RETAIL SALES



- ★ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week

inform

Charts can be viewed at www.informbd.com.au as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly

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THE ROAD TO MANDALAY	ROBBIE WILLIAMS	123368
SMOOTH CRIMINAL	ALIENT ANT FARM	123369
BOILER	LIMP BIZKIT	123371
RAPTURE	LJO	123375
IN THE END	LINKIN PARK	123378
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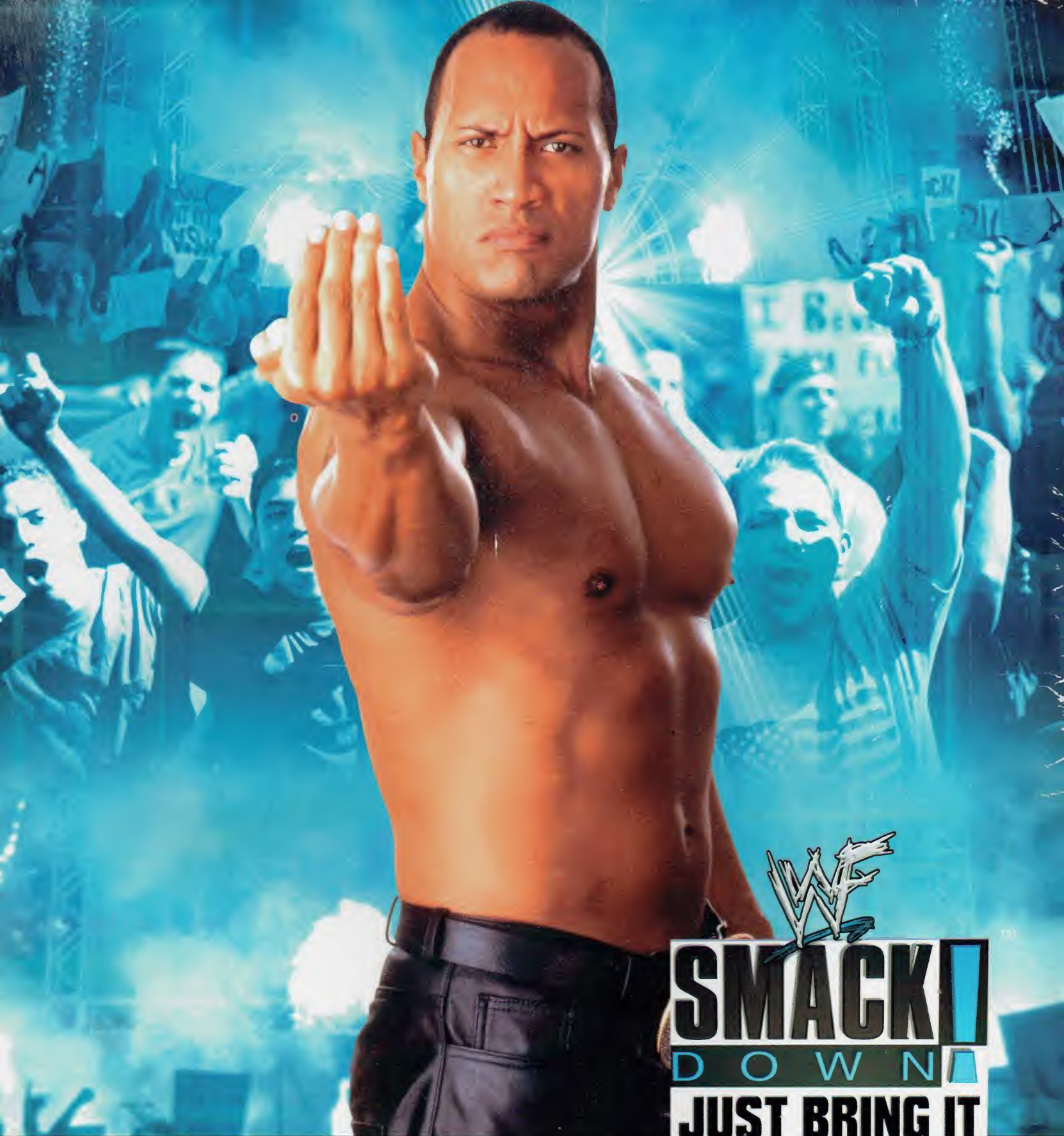
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